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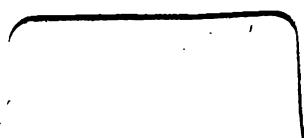
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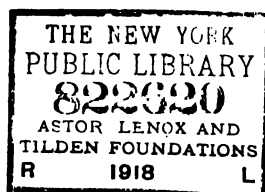
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STORIES OF THE OCCULT

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DUAL PERSONALTY

CHAPTER I

“**W**HERE am I?”

“Did you speak?” she asked as she turned and found me looking at her.

“Yes, where am I?” I repeated faintly.

These were the first words I had ever spoken, according to my recollection at that time.

“You are in a hospital,” she answered kindly. “You’ve been very sick for the last three weeks. You must keep quiet and not try to talk,” she cautioned me as I made an effort to continue. “Come, take this, it will give you strength.”

She gave me my medicine. Hearing footsteps at the door she tiptoed over and faced the doctor. Putting up a warning finger, she whispered:

“Our patient is awake. He asked me where he was.”

The doctor came up to me and felt my pulse, watching my features closely, meanwhile.

“What was his temperature?” he asked the nurse.

“Ninety-nine this morning, quarter after six.”

“The fever is broken,” the doctor replied in answer to a question by the nurse. “The danger is not by any means over yet, so watch him carefully and report to me the least sign for the worse. I think with careful nurs-

ing he'll come all right."

From this time on I gradually improved in strength, although I was several times on the point of relapse. In two weeks' time I was able to sit up and take little walks.

A few days after those few words addressed to the nurse on my return to consciousness, I was startled on my inability to answer a question which I addressed to myself:

"Who and what am I? Whence do I come?"

To say that I was startled, is putting it mildly. Think as I would—and I racked my brains for an answer—I could no more remember anything concerning my past history than the new-born child. Time and again I was asked my name, who my friends, where my home. Sometimes these questions were sprung unaware, when I was least on my guard. To all of which I gave one invariable answer:

"I do not remember."

At first they thought I was trying to hide my identity, but after numerous repeated efforts on their part—efforts which finally irritated me—they felt certain that such was not the fact, and that I was one of those strange cases of "Multiple, or Dual Personalities" which are such a puzzle to both, Psychologists and the Medical profession.

"What do you make of him?" the nurse asked the doctor one day.

"Frankly, I do not know," he answered, stroking his beard thoughtfully, as though trying to find a solution to the riddle in his hirsute appendage. "He may come all right, he may not. The fever and that severe bruise on the head have no doubt left their influence. We must wait until he gets stronger."

As I improved in strength, so my spirits improved. Once in a while I became subject to melancholy spells

during which times I became moody and silent. These spells were usually of short duration. Time and again I asked myself the question:

"Who am I and whence do I come?"

The nurse and I had many pleasant conversations. To me they were a delightful pastime; to her they were a means of sounding me.

We discussed numerous topics; history, geography, literature, my past occupation. All these things I remembered, but how I acquired this knowledge I could not recollect.

"It is so strange," she said one day, "that you remember all these things and yet do not recollect how or where you acquired them."

I assured her I would only be too happy to be able to answer the question as to my identity, and that I would make a bee line for home the moment I was discharged from the hospital.

Came a time when I was almost fit to be discharged. The doctor thought in a week or ten days I'd be able to take care of myself. Before discharging me they decided to call in Doctor Quackenboss, a noted hypnotist and specialist in nervous and mental diseases, with the intention of placing me under hypnotic influence—that is, experimenting on my subjective mind, whatever that was, so far as I understood its meaning at that time. I have since discovered what he meant by the "Subjective Mind," as I will relate to you in unfolding my history. I understand the workings of my mind thoroughly, both objectively and subjectively; better than any psychologist, both of the old school or the new, can tell me.

Three times this noted professor in occultism had me soundly asleep and completely under his influence. So the nurse informed me, and I believed she was right, as I remembered nothing on waking. But it would not

CHAPTER II

ONE week after this conversation with the nurse, I was discharged. I left the hospital with my grip under my arm and a few odd pennies in my pocket—a stranger in a strange land without a name, home or friend. I felt a little crestfallen as I walked along the city's streets, every now and then casting a sheepish glance around. I imagined everyone was watching me and I began to feel as though I had just escaped out of my neighbor's back-yard. In fact, if anyone would have accused me, I would have pleaded guilty to almost any charge.

After passing through the suburbs I reached the open country where my spirits soon underwent a complete transformation, due to the purer air and the more extensive view.

It was in the fall of the year and the fields were beginning to look brown and sere. Here and there I noticed the farmers husking their corn. Every now and then a sparrow's chirp greeted my ear as it flitted from post to post along the fence, or a chipmunk hurrying under cover. I was becoming foot-sore and weary, not being used to such exercise.

Coming up to a half-decayed log lying by the roadside, I sat down on it to rest and also to ponder over my unique situation. I reached into my pocket and drew out my jack-knife and the few pennies. The former I studied closely in the hope of finding some clue to my identity. It was stamped "Made in Germany." This simple message unfolded nothing to my inquisitive eyes.

"Let's look at the pennies," I said, holding one up between the forefinger and thumb,—'1885.' "Let's

look at the other side. Here's old Powhattan in paint and feathers, decked out for a scalping scrimmage. All very enlightening to me. I wonder where I got hold of this immense fortune, anyway," I soliloquized, juggling the pennies in my hand. "Heavens! Why I am worse off than 'The Man Without a Country.' He had at least a name. Well, I suppose it is no use worrying, it may all be for the best. My life may have been so miserable and rotten, so good-for-nothing that it is better to forget it. I'll just let fate or providence—"

"Hello stranger. Whither bound?"

I had been so preoccupied in my soliloquy that I had not noticed a team coming up behind me. It embarrassed me a little to be caught talking to myself. The words were spoken by an old man with a weazened, wrinkly, little face, to which was attached a thin, gray beard, bearing the appearance as though each separate hair was striving for supremacy on such meager soil. His two, little, black eyes, beaming with good nature, looked not unlike two beads of coal stuck into his head that might at any moment drop out of sight into the innermost recesses of his soul. They seemed to play a hide-and-seek game, bobbing up every once in a while like a "Punch and Judy" trying to say:

"Ah ha! I caught you at it, did I?"

In fact, his whole face beamed with good nature and whole-souled confidence.

"I do not know," I answered in response to his question. "All roads look alike to me at present, and so far as my present destination is concerned, they all appear to lead to Rome, as the old saying is. It makes little difference to me what direction I take, one way seems about as wide as the other is long."

"I was just thinking, stranger, if you'd go my way, you'd be welcome to drive along. I had occasion to

go to town to get twine to tie up the cornfodder, and am now on my way home."

"How far do you have to go, Mr. Farmer?"

"Well, I should say about six good miles."

"That makes about seven or eight at least," I answered laconically.

"I'll accept your invitation, mister, thank you," I answered, after casting a casual glance at the declining sun.

"Looking for work?" the old man asked me after we had proceeded on our way for sometime.

"Why yes, I suppose I will have to do something."

"Can you do farm work; ever work on a farm?"

"Yes, I used to work on a farm, although I don't know where."

The last words escaped me before I was aware of what I was saying.

"You don't know where?" the old man asked in surprise. "How is that?" looking at me sharply, his small black eyes again assuming that hide-and-seek expression, as though they were trying to say:

"Look what we have found."

I, who had intended not to say much about myself until I had invented some plausible tale, being thus caught unawares by my own indiscretion, thought I might as well explain and solve the old man's doubts.

"If you will give me your ear for a few moments, I'll try to explain what seems so strange to you. Sometime ago I got mixed up in a railway wreck, unintentionally, and got pretty well battered up. I've just escaped out of the hospital, where they kept me a prisoner for two months. I had a severe case of brain fever which left my mind a little 'Non compos mentis.' Who I am, or where I come from, the Lord knows, I don't. I don't even know my own name. When I say I can do farm work, I mean, I know how it is done, although

I can't remember where I got the experience."

"Well, well, that's strange! And not even a name! Lost it in some old box car. Do you think it got smashed up, too, like yourself? I mean the name."

"I don't know," I answered with a smile, beginning to have my doubts about the old man's sanity, even.

"You haven't found another one yet, have you?"

"Not yet. I expect to find one somewhere before long, though. I'll pick up the first one I find going astray," I answered, treating the subject as a huge joke.

The old man pondered in silence for sometime. Finally he looked up with a radiant expression on his face.

"Say, how would you like Lost Name, stranger?"

"That's it, Mr. Farmer; that covers my case exactly. You're all right. I never would have thought of such a name. However, I'll cut the "T" out and nickname myself 'Los.' Say Mr. Farmer, I'll have that name branded on my back, so in case I should lose that too, I'll know where to find myself."

"Yes, or have it carved out with a pen-knife," suggested the farmer, whereupon we both laughed loud and long. "Well, Mr. Los,—sounds queer, don't it? I can give you a job if you want to work for me, all winter. Mirandy,—that's my wife's name,—she and I are all alone, and it's most too much for us, beings we are both getting old. She'll be tickled to death when she finds out I have brought some help with me."

I, who will pass under the name of Los from now on, greatly delighted at this new proposition, accepted this offer, and I struck a bargain with the old farmer then and there. We soon arrived at the farmer's home which was pleasantly situated in a narrow valley between two mountains. Everything looked neat and clean, and homelike around the buildings, which were nearly new, and up-to-date. I got busy at once, as-

sisting the old man in putting away the horse and doing the chores.

All that winter I stayed with these simple but kind old folks, who treated me as though I was their own son. During the short winter days, after all outside work was done, I used to shoulder the farmer's old, muzzle-loading gun, taking long trips over the mountains in search of game. The evenings I employed in reading and studying.

The old farmer was an extensive reader himself and possessed a modest library of several hundred volumes, all well thumbed and earmarked.

One evening I was sitting in the dining-room laboriously studying a map of Pennsylvania in the vain hope of finding the name of some place or location that might vaguely suggest to my mind—subconsciously—a clue to my past, when the old farmer, whose name was Kantner, came into the room and laid a book on the table before me.

"Read that, Los. That may tell you some valuable hints about yourself that you don't know."

I read the title aloud: "The Subjective Mind."

"The Subjective Mind," I repeated. That is what the professor experimented on in the hospital:—My Subjective Mind. What is it?" I asked Kantner.

He explained to me.

"You know Los, Man is endowed with two minds—'The Objective Mind' and the 'Subjective Mind.'"

"I know nothing of the kind," I answered.

"The Objective mind," he continued without taking cognizance of my hasty reply, "is that which is active during consciousness. Its media of knowledge are the five senses. Its highest function is reasoning, both inductively and deductively.

"The 'Subjective Mind' is that which manifests itself during sleep, as in dreams, somnambulism, or occasion-

ally during our waking moments when the 'Objective Mind' is in a negative state. It is the seat of instinct in animals, and of intuition in Man. It is the seat of the emotions. It is a perfect storehouse of memory, and right here is where the chief importance comes in concerning your case. It has kept a perfect record of every act, word or thought of your former self, and who knows it may some day in the future reveal to you or someone else the history of your former self. It may give it to you through a dream, or it may give it to someone else, through your own mouth, in a trance condition. There are numerous ways in which it has the power to manifest."

These and many more things he told me concerning the "Subjective Mind" all of which were verified to me later on.

"Is this what you are telling me, theory or facts?" I asked, my mind beset with doubts.

"They are facts, my friend, and have been proven by scientists."

The old man spoke so sincerely, all doubt was removed from my mind. I cannot describe to you with what avidity I took up that book and perused its contents. I read and re-read it five different times. I knew it almost by heart. It was to me such a book of knowledge, it gave to me such hope, such faith, that I determined it should some day reveal to me that which I was so anxious to know—my former self. It became an obsession with me; it was the dominant thought in my mind on going to sleep at night and the first on waking in the morning. It was my only wish and prayer, and I determined to meet that prayer half way, feeling convinced that it would be answered, as all such prayers are answered, and the only ones that ever are answered.

As the winter drew on, my affection for these two,

kindly, old people increased, yet I often felt lonesome. I longed for excitement. I felt as though I wanted to be where there was danger, where I could battle with the elements, and nature. As spring drew near, this desire increased so, I could hardly resist its influence. I began to chafe like a horse at the bit. "The Call of The Wild" was urging me and I had to respond.

"This life is too dry and tame for me. I'll get musty and stagnant, confined between these mountains," I used to say to myself.

So one early morning in spring, after the weather had settled, I bid the old folks an affectionate farewell and left.

"Remember, my boy," the old man said with tears in his twinkling eyes as he shook my hand in parting, "if you ever feel lonesome again, or meet with misfortune, you know where to find Mirandy and I."

CHAPTER III

IT was early in fall, the beginning of October, almost a year and a half since I had left those honest old people back in central Pennsylvania. How bitterly I had regretted leaving their hospitable roof. Fain would I have gone back under it again, satisfied to spend the remaining days of my life with them. But that was impossible. I was unequal to the task. I had gone too far to retreat. To go back through the hardships I had come, meant certain death in my weakened condition. The future that lay before me in my wanderings was a sealed book to me, and for that reason gave me hope.

I had been working at odd jobs and tramping alternately ever since I had left them.

By some impulse within me, that kept me going onward and still onward, like the "Wandering Jew" without peace or rest, I had wandered across the wide, extensive plains of the Mississippi Valley, I had crossed the Great Divide, I had swam and waded rivers up to my neck, I had crossed the arid plains, and the alkali desert plateaus of the "Great Basin;" I had suffered the agony of thirst and starvation, with the blazing, scorching rays of the sun beating down upon my head, the hot, scalding sand of the desert blistering my feet in day time, the moon and the stars keeping me company at night.

I had been deluded by that enchanting illusion, the Mirage, beckoning me onward and onward in a vain attempt to satisfy my raging thirst with its cool, crystal water, receding, beckoning me and still receding as I advanced.

I had no one to commune with but my own inner self and the Great God above. Often times at night I was startled out of my sleep by the howl of the wolverine and the coyote.

If ever a man's soul was purged by going through a living purgatory and great tribulation, it was mine.

One night I came to a low range of mountains, thoroughly exhausted, bodily and mentally. I had traveled all that day and the previous night and part of the preceding day without a drop to drink or a morsel to eat. There had been a steady, dry wind blowing from the west. The alkali dust had entered my nose and mouth. My lips were cracked, my tongue was swollen and my nose and throat felt raw. I must have traveled sixty or seventy miles without pause or rest, the uneven tops of the mountains boldly outlined against the sky, drawing me onward. Will power I had none, it was more by intuition—an automatic impulse—that I kept on, in the hope of discovering water to cool my tongue and throat.

I reached the mountains and climbed part way toward the top. I could go no further. All ambition, all volition of movement was gone. I threw myself under a cluster of stunted pine trees, resolved to die. For a while I lay there oblivious to everything. Vaguely, as in a dream, I remember watching the stars and the moon overhead. Gradually, my fevered brain began to conjure up all kinds of imaginations and hallucinations, gradually drifting toward the state of my own self—the fate of my soul. I had resolved to die here in the sweet cool of the night. The tortures I had passed through prompted me to do so and end all.

"What would become of my soul?" My life had been passed under two distinct personalities. Of the former I remembered nothing. Under the latter, whatever mistakes I might have committed meriting the

judgment of God, I thought I had fully expiated by my present suffering. The mistakes of my former, forgotten life, would they also be forgiven and forgotten along with it?

Would I enter the great unknown as two distinct individualities, two souls, each meriting the approbation or disapprobation according to the life I had led here upon earth under each personality? I could not fathom it. My reasonings had unconsciously drawn me on deeper and deeper into the intricacies of the subject until I knew not which way to turn for a decision. I resolved to throw myself upon the mercy of the Almighty, trusting in His goodness to make everything right according to His wisdom.

My agitated mind became calm once more. Out of my objective state I gradually passed into a negative one, into that twilight zone, half conscious, half unconscious. Then I saw. I saw with my spiritual eyes that which was in after years proven to me as the truth. I saw in a little room, before a wooden bed a woman kneeling in prayer, her arms outstretched in supplication. Before her, in the bed, covered up, was a little child asleep. I distinctly saw its face, the curls of her dark hair lying in clusters over her neck and ears. And I heard the name of "Jim, Jim," plainly and distinctly.

These words, sounding on my clair-audient ear brought me back to consciousness. My objective mind became active, and all vanished. It had all come and faded in the twinkling of an eye.

What it represented or who was meant by the name "Jim" was not revealed to me at that time. But it gave me a certain sense of pleasure in that I had seen and heard clairvoyantly and clairaudiently. It was one of the manifestations of the Subjective Mind, as I had read in that book given to me by the old farmer in Pennsylvania.

I finally fell into a restless feverish sleep. I was surprised the next morning on finding myself still alive. The cool night had partly refreshed me, although I was burning inwardly. I struggled to my feet and staggered on along the side of the mountain like a man in a dream. I was going mad. I had barely advanced fifty feet when I scared a rabbit out of his nest. I had my gun in my hand and instinctively fired at him without taking aim. I accidentally hit him—wounded him. With a wild, gleeful cry I pounced upon him. Feverishly, I ripped the skin off his body and greedily, wolfishly, I buried my teeth into his still quivering flesh and gulped down mouthful after mouthful. After I had gorged myself I looked about me, hope once more rising in my heart. I soon began to feel a little stronger and proceeded slowly diagonally up the mountain. I had proceeded fifteen or twenty minutes, when, there, a short distance before me I saw a sight that gave me such delight that I cried for very excess of joy. Instantly I remembered the illusion on the desert—the tantalizing mirage. I stood still and watched the sight for sometime. Then I slowly advanced. It was no deception. It did not flee as I approached. It was real water, cool, refreshing water, dripping out through a small crag in the rocks. How my parched, swollen tongue licked that water as it came drip, drip, dripping slowly, but so steadily and so unfailingly.

Long I sat there on my knees catching every drop as it percolated through the crag. At last my thirst was partly satiated,—only partly,—but enough to alleviate that burning thirst I formerly experienced.

I unslung my empty canteen and fixed it under the wall so as to catch every precious drop, and then I laid down under a pine tree and rested my weary limbs and bruised feet. I decided to stay until I had again recovered my strength, refreshed my body and filled my

canteen.

All that day and night I stayed. Toward evening I shot another rabbit and partly ate his raw flesh. Matches I had none to build a fire with, having used my last one long previously. I did not miss them, the raw flesh tasted sweet to my palate.

CHAPTER IV

I WAS standing on the precipice of a wall rising perpendicular twenty-five or thirty feet, my red, flannel shirt and corduroy trousers in tatters; my felt hat having half of its brim torn away, and the soles of my shoes worn down to the uppers. My belt, containing my cartridges and gun hung loosely around my waist. I was reduced to a skeleton.

I was standing behind some bushes, peering between the branches over this precipice, down the side of the mountain, in a half dreamy, half conscious state, watching a little rivulet as it meandered its way through the gulch at its foot. I moved slightly and instantly felt a sharp pain in my right side. I faintly heard the crack of a rifle as I became faint, everything turning black before my eyes.

The next thing I knew on opening my eyes, I was lying on my back at the foot of the precipice, looking into the alarmed features of a young man who was bending over me.

"Thank the Lord! the blinking of your eyes, pard, has given me an awful relief. I was afraid I had sent you across to the great beyond, in mistake."

"Water," I gasped.

He unscrewed the top of a flask, enclosed in leather, hanging by his side, and applied it to my parched and cracked lips. I clasped it tightly within my thin, bony fingers and greedily gulped down its refreshing contents. How sweet it tasted!

He drew it away, I holding on in desperation.

"That is enough for the present," he said. "You shall have all you want by and by. Let me examine

your hurt."

I feebly placed my hand over my side where his bullet had struck me. A small stream of blood was trickling down my side as he removed the shirt. He examined it very carefully.

"I do not think it is dangerous," he said. The bullet struck a rib and glanced."

He offered me another drink and then said:

"I will run down to the camp for assistance to carry you back. Uncle will examine you. He knows more about such matters than I do."

I was too weak at the time, mentally and physically, to realize what this accident meant to me.

The Kid, as he was called, and as he afterward told me, had been taunted by his uncle on his bravery. Determined to refute his uncle's jeers by actual demonstration, he had set out with his rifle in quest of large game.

After leaving the camp, the Kid walked to the upper end of a gulch, at the lower end of which they had pitched their tent, with the intention of getting beyond the high cliffs that rose to the right of him, so as to allow him to ascend the mountain. He had been gone over an hour, and had worked his way well up along the side of the mountain through the rocks and stunted trees, when he came to a large, flat rock on which he had laid down to rest and bask in the sun. His further progress up the mountain was blocked by a huge wall of solid rock. Here, basking in the sun, he fell into a doze out of which he was rudely awakened by a stone hitting him in the small of his back. All was quiet—not a sign of life. Vainly he tried to discover the cause of the incident. Once he thought he heard a faint cry; but no he must have been mistaken. He had almost forgotten the incident and was about to return to camp, decided to retrieve his reputation for bravery

later on, when happening to gaze up, he noticed something moving amongst the boulders and bushes. Without any hesitation or consideration as to what it might be, he hastily raised his rifle and fired.

And thus, by this God-sent accident—a blessing in disguise—I happened to find myself amongst friends, at the expense of a slight bullet wound to myself.

The Kid immediately started to run down the mountain in quest of help. In a half-dazed sort of way I watched him as he zigzagged his way, jumping and dodging to the right and left as he avoided the rocks and trees that beset his path. Once I saw him sprawl headlong in his flight, his rifle being jerked out of his hand, and thrown far ahead of him. He hastily picked himself up and proceeded.

He had gone probably a half hour, when he returned with a companion, a young man slightly shorter but more stoutly built. I heard the Kid call him Bust.

"How are you going to take him?" I heard Bust ask the Kid as they neared me.

"Give me your knife and I'll soon show you, I lost mine when I fell in running down the mountain."

In about five minutes the Kid returned with a stout stick about four feet long.

By seating me on the stick between them, each taking a firm hold on the end with one hand while with the inside arm supporting me they carried me safely down the mountain, after which they gently placed me on the ground and took a rest, in the meantime bathing my wound which had started to bleed afresh, caused by the jolts in carrying me. After being thoroughly rested, they proceeded to camp with me, where we found the Kid's uncle busily preparing supper.

The sweet, savory smell of the frying bacon greeted my olfactory nerves as we approached, and I began to gloat over the prospective feast.

"Hello, what is this," Uncle inquired, eyeing me curiously, "a funeral procession?"

"Not quite that, Uncle. Came near being one though. He is only a little down in the mouth," answered the Kid, whereupon he related the whole incident, Uncle not saying a word nor asking a question until the Kid had finished.

"You certainly take the premium all right, you do, for down right cussed carelessness. Whatever will become of you I don't know. You'll yet wind up your illustrious career with a hempen necktie around your neck. Is he mortally hurt? How are you pard, is there still enough sand in you to give an Indian whoop?"

Uncle had a gruff way of speaking under any circumstances, as I later on discovered, although he was kind and affectionate at heart. The Kid was a little crest-fallen on receiving this lecture from his uncle, especially as it happened before me, a stranger. As for me, I considered myself an unwelcome guest, in doubt whether to think good or ill of this big, raw-boned man. The Kid, seeing the expression on my face, came up to me and said kindly:

"Uncle wants to know how you are feeling, whether you are strong enough to talk."

"Very weak, water please," I gasped in a whisper.

"Water you shall have," the Kid answered turning to get some out of the brook.

"Put a little brandy in it," Uncle called after. "Let me examine your wound stranger. I have a little experience in that line, and know somewhat about gunshot wounds. I have had a few myself. When you are plugged that full that you imagine yourself a walking arsenal, with a score of redskins cavorting around you, drawing sticks for the privilege of lifting your top-knot, that's the time you remember you once had a

home and mamma."

While he was talking in this strain, he was all the while deftly examining the wound. His reference to remembering home and mother brought home to me forcibly the recollection of my non-recollection of those sacred ties.

"This hole in your side stranger," he continued, "does not amount to a shuck of peas. With proper care and nursing I reckon, you'll be able to stampede again in a few weeks. Kid, I reckon we'll have to put him in your bunk, being you've had the honor of almost committing the unpardonable sin. Furthermore, the duty of nursing him back to health will devolve upon you. You'll assume your new duties at once, taking part in such other amusements and pleasures as the condition of the patient will allow."

I was immediately placed in the Kid's bunk, after which he redressed my wounds and then prepared me something light and nourishing to eat.

I rested fairly well during the night, and by morning felt greatly improved, and with the exception of a slight fever during the first week, continued steadily to improve.

I now had someone to speak to. The oppressive stillness and awful solitude of the desert, the scorching rays of the sun, the blistering sand, the combination of all these nearly driving me mad—all these were things of the past. I felt as though they had been a year ago. The Kid, guided by his Uncle's instructions—Uncle himself acting as physician and surgeon—performed his duties well and faithfully, and with my robust constitution, in less than three weeks I was about and able to help myself.

The Kid and I became fast friends, almost like two brothers, taking numerous strolls up the brook, fishing for trout and shooting squirrels and hare.

Up to this time no one had as yet broached the subject of my past history, and I had likewise refrained from telling them. Even to the Kid, with whom I had become very confidential, I had not as yet mentioned a word. I had decided to wait until I had won their complete confidence. To be sure, Uncle was becoming a little dubious about me.

"I don't intend for us to harbor a horse thief amongst us," I overheard him say to Bust and the Kid one morning. "It's not etiquette to ask a stranger within your gates who he is nor where he comes from, but its nation's polite of him to tell you."

"Nation, Nation," I repeated to myself. It was the first time he had used the by-word in my presence; in fact it was the first time the word had ever been used in my presence during my present identity. And yet, just so surely as I was alive, somewhere, sometime in the past I had heard that word before in the sense in which he used it. Even the tone of the voice struck me as distinctly familiar. However, try as I would, I could not recollect the time nor place of its utterance. Was it a half-conscious mental flash of that which I had so completely forgotten? Was it one of the little incidents packed in the storehouse of my Subjective Mind, that had risen to the threshold of conscious memory? Who can tell? I could not at that time. All these things and many more of a like nature were made plain to me years afterward.

Uncle was determined, if I wouldn't speak before long, he'd feel me, as he styled it. So one evening after I had fully recovered and we were all seated around the camp-fire, smoking and telling stories, the conversation was very gently shifted unto me.

"How long is it now, stranger," up to this time I had always been addressed as the 'stranger' or 'partner,' "since you have had daylight put through you?" in-

quired Uncle, "begging your pardon for asking the question."

"It will be four weeks tomorrow, Uncle," replied the Kid.

"Time flies," remarked Uncle thoughtfully, knocking the ashes out of his pipe methodically, refilling and lighting it.

"Considering that you are pretty fairly established on your pins again, may I ask you if you have formulated any plans as to your future campaign. Bust and the Kid and myself have been rampaging around here all summer prospecting for gold, although with little success so far as dividends are concerned. We have talked it over between ourselves and we have decided to invite you to join us permanently if you feel inclined that way. Of course if you feel inclined to travel with our outfit, I presume you wouldn't mind telling us what handle you are traveling under, so we shall know what to call you when asking you to meals."

Having thus delivered himself, the three patiently waited for what I had to say for myself.

"Perhaps gentlemen," I began, "after you have heard my story you will not consider me such a welcome addition to your 'outfit.' I am no horse-thief," I explained, remembering the words I had overheard sometime previously, "never even having robbed a man of a penny to my recollection. You have all acted the good Samaritan to me, and I am not only willing but rather eager to give an account of myself. If you will listen, I will briefly give you the story, so far as I know."

I proceeded to give a brief history of myself so far as my knowledge of it went, after which I politely thanked them for the invitation they extended, and which I told them I would cheerfully accept if they were still so minded.

"That is a very strange and sad story of yours, pard,

although I have heard of such cases before, where people have lost count of certain things and recollected others," Uncle said, continuing:

"Boys, have you ever heard of phrenologists?" Not waiting for any of us to either affirm or deny, he proceeded:

"A phrenologist is one who gets his knowledge free and professes to know all about one's brains and the shape of the head and its bumps. The phrenologist claims the brain is divided into apartments same as a house. Each apartment of the brain performs a certain function independently of the others and gives individuality and character to the person who so possesses them according to the prominence of each apartment. They say if any of those apartments gets into the way of an irresistible force or such like, its contents are liable to get addled, and the person forgets all about what he had stored therein.

"I opine, stranger, the contents of some of your apartments must have gotten mixed the time you were waylaid in the wreck.— And now they have called you 'Lost Name,'" he continued after due reflection. "That old farmer had a well developed sense of dry humor, when he gave you the name."

"He had, he had the queerest, laughing, little eyes you ever looked into; and he had a kindly disposition. He was a man whom I would take as a model," I replied.

"Boys, we have all heard his tale, and for my part, I believe it. What say you, will we adopt him?"

Bust and the Kid, both gave a vigorous consent, and I stood elected a full member.

"From now on, stranger, or rather, I presume we will call you 'Los' you are at perfect liberty to make yourself at home, same as you did before," Uncle proclaimed with a wide sweep of his right arm, designat-

ing everything, including the whole surrounding country, in sight.

"From now on it will be 'One for all, and all for one'—hit or miss, make or break, live or die, sink or swim, survive or perish."

"Well done, Uncle!" the Kid shouted. "Where did you hear that?"

"Where did I hear it?" he asked, slightly exasperated at the question. "That is original. I do not have to borrow my sayings. One thing I wish to state, Los. Profane language will not be tolerated in this camp. The only time the Lord's name may be used is when you speak respectfully of Him or in reading the Bible, which book you will find in the tent at your disposal whenever you may feel a desire to peruse its pages.

"And now boys, if we intend to hibernate in these diggings we'll have to build a cabin, because winter is liable to come down upon us sudden and hard."

We began building operations the next day, the Kid and I felling the trees and making the logs; Bust and Uncle attending to the building part.

In about two weeks' time we were ready to occupy our cabin, which was much more cozy and roomy than the tent.

The Kid, Bust and I made several trips to town about thirty miles distant, for our winter supply of provisions—flour, sugar, salt, coffee and bacon. Our main supply of food consisted of game, which we supplied fresh as we needed it.

A severe winter set in, the long evenings of which we beguiled by smoking, playing cards and relating tales of adventure, Uncle being especially well provided with that social commodity. Often times, when the wind was howling down the gulch, screaming and whistling around our cabin, piling the snow mountain high in

front of our door, everything snug and safe inside—at such times Uncle always appeared at his best, regaling his audience with tales of the great Northwest: the hardships he went through, the hair-breadth escapes from wild animals; the rapids he had shot and the mighty rivers he had forded. All this worked wondrously on the Kid's imagination. The more realistic and hair-splitting the narrative, the wider he opened his eyes and mouth in amazement, until he could contain himself no longer.

"Let's all pack up and go to the Klondike," he said.

I, who was always a close second in whatever the Kid proposed in way of adventure wasn't slow to assist him in agitating the subject.

"Yes, let's go. We'll make you 'Grand High Muck a Muck' of the outfit, Uncle," I said.

"You'd play the fiddle and we'd dance to your music," emphasized the Kid in way of jollyng Uncle.

"To the nation with you and your fiddle."

Again like a cloud passing over me, came that queer sensation like a faint recollection of having heard that word in the far distant, misty past. Even the man who uttered it, everytime he did so, appeared to have some shadowy resemblance to someone whom I had known once before. However, it was all like some hazy dream that one tries to piece together on awakening in the morning. You seem to have a flash of recollection, when, presto! all is again forgotten, and cudgel your brains as you will, you can not remember.

However, this was not the time to dwell on the subject. I wanted to be alone where all was quiet and where I could put myself into that negative state, that semi-conscious zone, where I could listen to the voice of my own soul, and only then, if at any time, I would receive the answer to my question, and that I felt sure would help to solve the mystery of my past.

"Boys," Uncle continued, "this going to the Klondike is not like catching minnows out of a brook. It means lots of stamina and perseverance through all kinds of weather and mosquitoes, with the thermometer so low in winter, it takes a microscope to find it."

From that time on the Klondike was the principal topic of conversation. The subject was thoroughly discussed, pro and con, with the result that we finally decided to go.

The Kid was in ecstasy. He fairly reveled in imaginations of all kinds, and soon became the owner of several big ranches, let alone the fine mansion he would build for his mother to live in and the foreign countries he'd travel, after coming back to civilization.

"Kid," Uncle addressed him one day after the Kid had confided to him some of his prospective plans, "of all the high-minded dreamers I have ever seen or heard, you beat everything this side the borderland of nowhere. If your sky-highing castles that you've been building for the last three weeks ever happen to collapse in mid-air before we get out of here, the Lord save you and the rest of us, should we be near enough to get caught in the debris. The wreck Los was caught in will be a miniature compared to the flying shingles, rafters, splinters, chunks of marble and Texas steers that'll be flying about us. I say Kid, never count your beebies before they are hatched, and be mighty careful how you handle them after you get them out of the shell."

This ridicule put a damper in the Kid's spirits for a little time, but being of a very cheerful disposition, he soon forgot it and began to build new ones.

Very little prospecting was done the remainder of the winter, every hour of our time being occupied in planning and preparing for the adventure. Uncle, by virtue of his experience became the reference and guide

book for all of us. After thrashing out the virtues of the different routes, pro and con, it was finally decided to take the "Great Peel River Route."

CHAPTER V

ON a beautiful spring morning in May, we found ourselves paddling down Athabasca River toward the great lake bearing the same name, in a flat-bottomed boat of our own construction, loaded with tools and provisions, on our great journey to the Klondike.

"Here's where we'll roost for the night," said Uncle as he steered the boat toward the shore, one night.

It was an ideal place for pitching a camp—right between two big pine trees, with a hillock rising very abruptly as a back-ground.

While the rest were busy putting up the tent and performing other necessary duties, I shouldered my gun, intending to take a short stroll into the forest in quest of game. I kept on walking for sometime, buried in my own thoughts, not paying much attention where I was going nor how late it was getting. Suddenly a big hare jumped up in front of me, which I as promptly shot. Picking it up I slung it across my shoulder, and started back to camp.

"Let me see,—which way did I come?" vainly looking around for some land mark whereby I might recognize my bearing.

The more I tried to locate myself the more I became confused. Besides it was getting dark, which added to my confusion. I now began to realize the predicament I was in. To sleep in the woods, unprotected, a prey to wild beasts, was out of the question; to proceed without knowing whither I was going, was almost as bad. I might walk in a circle, gradually enlarging it, thereby drawing the attention of my friends by keeping up a continual shout. Even by doing so, I

ran a great risk of increasing the distance between myself and camp.

"I was a blamed fool for not taking note where I was going. Serves me right. The rest will put me down as a jackass not to be trusted out of their sight hereafter."

My soliloquy was suddenly interrupted by a faint and distant sound through the forest. Turning my head to a side, my nerves on a tension, I listened intently for a repetition of that sound, which I knew but too well.

"I must be mistaken. I must have imagined it," I said to myself as I resumed my composure. "No, it was no imagination." This time I heard it more distinctly, still faintly, but nearer. I now became thoroughly alarmed. Well might I be, the danger I had to face was no child's play. I had often heard that sound before—yes often—and never thought much of it. Those times I was secure from attack, but here I was out in the open, all alone, subject to attack from all sides. Again I heard it; this time a long, drawn howl, answered shortly after from another direction. The forest soon became a howling wilderness. The signal had gone out, and it seemed that every wolf for miles around was answering the call to close in on the prey—on me.

I was no coward. Although I was now thoroughly scared, I determined to sell my life dearly. If I could keep the pack from closing in around me I might have a chance, slim though it was. Thus far the howls came at right angles to the direction in which I thought the camp lay. Taking a firm grip on my rifle and tightening my belt, I started to run in which I thought the direction of the camp, but, unwittingly I took the wrong direction.

"If only I had a match; my life for a match!" I

thought, as I finished going through my pockets in a vain search for the invaluable little companion.

Nearer and still nearer the pack came. I imagined I could see their shadows flitting in and out amongst the trees. Presently I saw the green, glaring eyes of a big brute in advance of all the rest which I took for the leader. The brute saw me at the same time, setting up a long, ferocious howl, at the same time making a leap for me. Up went my rifle. The beast dropped midway in his course, writhing with pain and baffled rage on the ground. In a moment the rest of the pack were up, and seeing their fallen leader out of business, growling and tearing up the ground in impotent fury, they set upon him, snarling and snapping at each other like fiends, burying their fangs into him and tearing him to pieces. I shivered when I saw this sight, contemplating what was in store for me. Casting the hare I had shot, amongst them, I took to my heels as fast as I could run. For a moment I increased the distance between myself and the pack—but only for a moent. The pack was after me again in full cry. Waiting until they were close enough, I suddenly wheeled around and brought my rifle to my shoulder. Four times it cracked in rapid succession, each shot bringing down one of my foes, their comrades again tearing them into pieces in fiendish gluttony. Again I ran and widened the distance while they were feasting.

My magazine being now empty, I hastily refilled it while running. Nine more bullets remained. Nine more foes—then what? I feared to think of it. Surely something would happen in my favor. The pack seeing me, their chief prey, escape, set up a howl and started after me. They were again near enough for me to single them out in the darkness. Five times my Winchester cracked, with a result of four more casualties amongst the brutes.

"Once more," I thought, as I started to run, and then for the last stand.

For the first time in my extremity, I called upon God to save me. I gave the cry of a man in distress, hemmed in on all sides, without a vestige of hope, determined to strike one more blow before the inevitable end. I prayed for some miracle to interpose and thus save me from such a horrible death.

In that extreme hour of my distress I had a brief vision of my forgotten life. It passed before me in panoramic view as through a crystal, in a flash. What the vision revealed to me I could not recall afterward, yet I am positive of having had the vision. It passed out of my memory as it came, illusive, like that phantasm of the desert—the mirage. It was a manifestation of the "Subjective Mind," that rose to the threshold, usurping the throne of consciousness until death or danger was past.

Again the pack was upon me. I flashed my eyes to Heaven, as though looking for the miracle I had prayed for, to descend. I faced suddenly about and sent the four remaining bullets among the pack. My actions had become automatic. Death, now that it appeared inevitable, was not the horrible monster I thought it to be. A short brief time and all would be over.

I clubbed my rifle and took a firm stand—a fusilade of shots came from the rear of me. My prayer was answered, not in some miraculous way, such as I had prayed for, but hardly hoped and never expected, but just in an ordinary, natural way as it always comes about when least expected.

Hurriedly looking around in grateful surprise, I saw Uncle, Bust and the Kid coming to my rescue. This welcome sight was such a relief to my wrought-up nerves that I nearly broke down for joy. Each one of my friends was provided with a lighted pine torch.

These they threw amongst the pack which scattered them for a moment.

"Kid, you build a fire, quick, while we stand the brutes off. It's the only way to save our skins from these hell-hounds," declared Uncle.

The danger was not by any means over yet. Hunger had made the brutes brave, and the slaughter amongst them had only served to make them more ferocious. We three put up a valiant fight while the Kid was building a fire. This was our best defense. The beasts were too cowardly to come within that circle of light. We kept up the fight all night long with our rifles and by hurling fire brands amongst them. When daylight came, they reluctantly slunk away into the forest, after which we made our way back to camp, about a mile and a half distant.

"How in the nation did you get caught in such a trap, anyway?" asked Uncle of me on our way back. "If it had been a tenderfoot, or the Kid here for instance, I wouldn't have expected anything different. But you!—well I don't understand."

"I lost my bearings. That's about all the explanation I can give. I had just shot a hare and was ready to start back when I lost all reckoning and presently found myself in the hottest hole I've ever been in."

"Yes, I never saw a more ghost-like looking man in all my life. But you've got the right kind of blood in your veins, Los. You stood there like—like the 'Spirit of Seventy-six.'"

"But how did you know I was in danger? Did you hear them howl?"

"Yes, the Kid was the first one to prick up his ears. Shortly after, everyone could hear 'em. It didn't take us long to make tracks in your direction, either. In about five minutes more you'd 'a' been across the 'Great Divide.'"

CHAPTER VI

DAY after day, we continued our journey down the Athabasca and Slave Rivers, skirting the lakes of Athabasca and Great Slave, down the great Mackenzie, everyone in a gala mood; especially the Kid and I. Bust, who seldom showed any emotion, took things in a matter-of-fact way. As for Uncle—he was too much of an old stager; besides, he had been in this country before and felt perfectly at home. Nothing of importance happened to us, everything going smoothly, as such expeditions should, but seldom do, until we had traveled about four hundred miles down the Mackenzie, when an accident happened to the Kid which proved of everlasting benefit to that youngster, and also gave Uncle an opportunity for giving him one of his famous lectures, as the Kid used to call them. Things were becoming monotonous to the Kid—the same routine work, day after day, and he was wishing for something “stirring to happen” as he expressed it.

“You’ll get all the stirring times you’re hankering after before you’ll see your mammy’s apron strings again, I opine,” Uncle answered him one day.

It came about sooner than the Kid had expected and not in a way to increase that person’s appetite for “something stirring” to happen. We had come to a place where the river narrowed to about a quarter mile, running between two steep mountains for about a mile in length. The river here was running deep and treacherous, assuming almost the rapidity of rapids, being dotted with sharp and dangerous rocks projecting above its surface, making canoeing and boating dangerous, requiring a strong arm and a steady nerve. About half-

way down this course was a long, narrow island, about three hundred feet from the west bank. It being well advanced toward evening when we arrived at the head of this narrow gorge, Uncle suggested camping there over night, explaining that:—

“Those rapids are dangerous, and you want a steady nerve to shoot rapids.”

The next morning, bright and early, the Kid started to carry some of our baggage down to the boat. The place where the boat was moored, not suiting him exactly, he untied it and proceeded to direct it further down the stream toward a spot more favorable and easy of loading. How it happened, he could never tell, he explained afterward. However, before he realized his danger, the current was gradually carrying him into mid-stream. The rest of us who had not been paying particular attention to him, were suddenly brought to our feet by a cry of alarm from the Kid. All three realized at a glance the danger threatening the Kid, boat and provisions. Uncle was wild with rage and fear; with rage on account of the destruction of the boat, and with fear on account of the Kid's life. He ran up and down the bank, shouting and gesticulating like a wild man, all the while shouting out instructions to the Kid what to do. The boat had by this time been drawn into the current, and was liable to be dashed against the rocks at any moment, destroying both it and the Kid. The Kid fought manfully to save himself and the boat, but being inexperienced, he fought like a ship in a storm without a rudder. He was fast losing his head and nerve, becoming rattled to such an extent, that his ineffectual efforts to save the boat and himself did more to jeopardize the safety of both than if he had left everything to chance to carry him safely through. In making a lunge with the paddle against a rock to prevent the boat from striking its sharp edge,

his foot slipped, thereby diverting his arm, causing him to miss it. For an instant he stood poised, trying to regain his balance. The boat, grazing the rock, gave a sudden lurch to the right, precipitating him head-long into the foaming current. A cry of alarm went up from us on the bank.

I took in the situation instantly. Running down the bank, meanwhile divesting myself of my clothing, shouting back to the rest to bring a rope, I fearlessly plunged into the stream some distance above the island. I struck out for mid-stream, at right angles to the island, which was my objective point. I reached the island in safety, although nearly exhausted. Scrambling to my feet I hastily cast about for signs of the Kid, whom I feared had gone under. I saw him being swept along by the current not more than twenty feet above me making weak and ineffectual efforts to reach the island. I saw that I would have to act quickly if I'd want to save him. Shouting a word of encouragement, I made one tremendous leap and almost launched myself upon him, striking the water three feet below him. Reaching out with my left arm, I grabbed hold of the Kid as he floated by, while with my other arm I fought my way back to the island, gaining it about two hundred feet below my first landing. We were both so exhausted, we barely had strength enough left to draw ourselves out of the water, neither of us saying a word for sometime after, the Kid being nearly drowned, especially gasping for breath. Uncle and Bust, who had watched the rescue from the bank, gave vent to their joy by wildly throwing their hats into the air and shouting bravos.

The battle was but half won. We were safe for the present, but we were on the wrong side of the stream. The question was, how to get safely back to the river bank. Would we be able to make it? One thing was

sure: we couldn't stay where we were. We were chilled, and it was highly necessary for our health that we got back to dry clothes and a warm fire.

In the meantime, what had become of our boat and our supplies? The Kid's rescue had so absorbed everyone's attention, that it was quite forgotten as it was being buffeted down stream, zigzagging its perilous way between the dangerous rocks, like a drunken sailor. One time it was making a sudden lunge at a vicious looking rock as though endowed with reason and trying to batter its particular object of hatred to pieces; again, being balked in its designs, it would change its mind, whirl suddenly around and repeat the tactics with its stern. Thus it fought its way, staggering through the rapids, until it reached pacific waters again, when like a drunken man coming out of a debauch, it quietly surrendered itself to reason and majestically floated down the stream.

Bust and Uncle, had up to this time given all their attention to the major part of the event—that of saving the Kid's life. As soon as we were safely landed on the island, Bust's memory reverted to the boat and its fate. Glancing up and down the stream and not seeing anything of it, he concluded it had met with destruction.

"Uncle, I guess the boat got drowned. It's not in sight anywhere."

Uncle, happening to look down the stream, noticed a black object floating close to the bank about a half mile below.

"What's that down yonder close to the bank, Bust? 'pears to me like a big log or something of the sort."

"I think that's the boat, Uncle. I'll take a rope and run down and see. If it is, I'll tow it to shore and secure it."

Before Bust covered half the distance, he felt sure it

was the boat, and that it was close enough to the bank for him to throw a rope across the bow and haul it to the bank. Coming up to the boat, he hurriedly made a noose in one end of the rope to serve as a lariat. Throwing the noose over the bow, he pulled it in and tied it to a tree and then hastened back to assist Uncle in rescuing the Kid and me.

"It's the boat all right, Uncle, and everything is snug so far as I could see."

"That's good. Now we'll have to circumvent some scheme to help the boys across. It's a ticklish job. I guess this will serve to make the Kid a little bit more careful in the future.

"How're you doing boys?" he shouted across to us. "Think you can hold your wind long enough if we help you across with a rope? Bust, will that rope reach?" pointing to a coil of rope at his feet. "Hey Los," he shouted as he picked up the rope, "I'm going to throw this rope across, and I want you to grab a hold of it if it reaches."

Tying a stone to it, he whirled it round and round his head and suddenly left go. The rope was long enough to reach across, but I missed it. Again Uncle went through the process. The rope left his hand as though shot from a catapult. This time I was more successful, by getting a firm hold on it before it was drawn into the stream.

"Is the Kid strong enough to try it? We want to pull him across first. All he's got to do, is to keep his pumpkin above water. We'll do the rest," Uncle shouted.

The Kid thought he'd try it. Fastening the rope around his chest, under the arms, he gave a "b-r-r-r," and without a moment's delay, he boldly plunged in. The current was so strong that the rope was in danger of breaking, and it took the united efforts of Uncle and

Bust to pull him to shore. The Kid wasn't much the worse for this second plunge, it having taken but a few minutes to pull him across.

"You're a pretty game fish after all, Kid, and it will serve to cover a multitude of sins on your part. Now run, so as to get your corpuscles moving, until we get Los across. Take your duds off and put something else on. Now Los, here's a go for you," Uncle shouted as he once more coiled up the rope.

Again the rope whirled around his head. With a hiss like a serpent it shot through the air, landing at my feet. I promptly stepped on it.

"That was a good shot, Uncle," I shouted across as I proceeded to untie the stone, and fasten the rope around me.

When all was ready I shouted across for Uncle and Bust to look out, and plunged in. I was about half-way across when something happened. The rope was not strong enough to resist the tension, and broke. I went out of sight before the rest knew what had happened. The first they knew of anything going wrong was to find themselves sprawling on the ground.

"The Lord help him now!" Uncle exclaimed as he regained his feet.

I was a good swimmer, although I was inexperienced in such water as this. For a moment I hardly knew what had happened. When I realized what it was, I knew that my only chance in safety lay in trying to prevent myself from being dashed against the rocks, and leave the current carry me down into more quiet waters. Several times I came near being dashed against these treacherous obstacles. What I feared most was a head-on collision, in which case I would be knocked unconscious, and that would end my career. While thus meditating and battling for my life, I suddenly found myself shot into friendly waters, Spurting the

water out of my mouth, I continued to float so as to gain strength to enable me to swim to the bank, which I finally gained just as Uncle and Bust came running down, all out of wind.

"The Lord be praised!" Uncle ejaculated between his breaths. "We thought you were a goner this time for sure."

"Not yet, Uncle, although I had my doubts about it myself for a little while. But where's the Kid?"

"Down below there, where the boat is, putting dry paraphernalia on. I don't think he knows about the excitement. Let's go down," Uncle suggested.

In a few moments we came down to where the Kid and the boat were. Uncle proceeded to examine closely, I meanwhile decking myself with a new outfit

"Kid," said Uncle, as he straightened himself before the young worthy, who immediately felt a weakening sensation in his knees in expectation of a severe lecture, "I'm not going to lecture you, because I'm totally unable to do justice to the occasion; but since you were the prime mover in this diversion, I'll use my prerogative and order you to carry wood and build a fire so as to dry those clothes."

It was decided not to proceed any further that day, but to remain until morning so as to give us a chance to recover, Uncle remarking that, "Shooting the rapids was a day's work in itself," especially in that style.

Three months after we had left Edmundson we found ourselves at the head of the Peel River, where another stretch of hard labor confronted us—that of lugging our supplies across the mountains to the head of the Beaver River. This it took us a week to accomplish, after which we rested one whole day, it being a Sunday.

"Boys," said Uncle, as we were all trying to smoke out the mosquitoes, "we are now in the Klondike, as

near as I can determine, and it behooves us to be on the watch for the yellow stuff. Tomorrow, Kid, you and I'll get out our digging tools and start out on a prospection down the river. Los and Bust will remain and keep their eyes on the outfit."

This plan suited the Kid to a dot, it being more in line with his prospective air-castles. During the night he dreamed of mountains of gold where, all that was necessary was a pick and shovel, and a brawny arm to dig it out in chunks heavier than a man could lift. He was in the midst of one of these beatific hallucinations, vainly struggling with one of these huge nuggets when he was somewhat rudely brought back to earthly conditions by a violent shake from Uncle, who told him to:

"Hurry up to the feeding trough and get your share of the fodder so we can make a break and get to business."

After the Kid and Uncle had gone for sometime, I suggested to Bust that we might do some prospecting on our own account. In view of the danger our provisions were in on account of bears and other wild animals, one of us necessarily had to remain to stand guard over them, the other one promising to keep within rifle-shot hearing.

CHAPTER VII

THE place where we had located our camp was at the mouth of a little run which wormed its way through the mountains and emptied its turbulent, babbling waters into the creek, down which we had thus far journeyed. Up this little stream, which was as clear as crystal, I wended my way. I enjoyed this stroll, all by myself, immensely. My heart bounded with delight as I viewed the grand scenic effects of the mountains, their sharp peaks covered with ice and snow. I had probably strolled up the stream half-a-mile, when I came to a large, flat rock that overhung the stream where it had formed into a shallow, little pool, the bottom of which was covered with variegated pebbles. Here, I decided to sit down. Laying my rifle alongside of me, I filled my pipe, and was soon lost in deep reflections, as I gazed into the limpid pool beneath me, my eyes assuming a faraway expression.

"I wonder who I am supposed to be, anyway. Strange, that a little knock on the head can so effectually put a part of yourself to sleep and leave the remaining part of you so painfully awake."

Thus I sat on that rock, looking unconsciously into the crystal pool, lost in reverie, having lost all consciousness of surrounding objects. I unconsciously passed into that negative state, that half-conscious zone, in which I began to take pleasure the oftener I did so. It began to be a real world to me, in which I could dream, yea, in which I could often times see things beyond my natural field of vision. In my subconscious state, as I sat upon that rock, gazing into the pool, I saw with my spiritual eyes a village, the houses of which were built

irregularly along the roadside, some of them half hidden behind the trees that shaded their fronts; I saw golden, waving fields of grain ready for the reaper; in others I saw herds of cattle browsing; I saw the little brook hurriedly flowing between its narrow banks, and in the distance, beyond the village I could see a barrier of mountains, looking so green and fresh. All these things I saw as in a dream, yet I was not dreaming.

I returned to consciousness. The vision instantly vanished. I was once more the center of my present surroundings, and began to take an inventory of my present state, my second state of existence.

"I guess Uncle was pretty nearly right when he designated the brain a junk shop, full of apartments for storing all kinds of ideas—good, bad or indifferent. Well Los, I suppose its of no use bemoaning your loss. It appears I'm still it," I continued, pressing down the tobacco in my pipe.

My attention was suddenly attracted by something in the pool; not one thing, but thousands of them; things that I had been looking at right along, but never noticed. I had been so preoccupied in my own unconscious reflections that my mind had refused to accept what my eyes had been trying to tell me; something similar to a person reading, and listening to someone talking at the same time, and who suddenly remembers that he does not remember, and has to go back and start all over again.

The little pool was literally full of little, sparkling suns and stars, winking and blinking at me as though they were bidding me a gay good-morning. They seemed to beckon me to come and put my fingers on them; to take them out and fondle them and play with them. I jumped up and hurriedly waded into the stream and hastily picked a few of them up. A sec-

ond's examination convinced me what they were. To make sure, I took them between my teeth.

"Gold, gold! A mint of gold! Gee, won't this make the Kid go into extravagance?"

At this moment two shots were fired in rapid succession. With a bound I jumped out of the stream. To grasp my rifle and make a break in the direction of the camp took but a second's time.

"I wonder what is up now," I mused, irritated at being disturbed in my wonderful find.

It took me but a few minutes to reach the camp—and none too soon. Two immense bears had invaded the camp while I was away, no doubt attracted by the smell of provisions, especially the bacon. One of them was busily engaged in taking an inventory of our stock of supplies, whilst the other one devoted his time to hugging Bust, whose face and right arm showed unmistakable signs of the brute's strenuous love making. His coat and shirt were torn into shreds, and the blood was streaming down his face from a wound in his forehead. Not more than ten feet away, lay a rifle, with the stock broken off. The bear also showed signs of not having escaped damage during the scrimmage. His left shoulder was bleeding profusely, no doubt from a wound caused by a bullet.

One glance over the battlefield was enough for me to size up the situation. Shouting a cry of warning for Bust to look out, I hurriedly ran up to within a few yards of the bear and, taking a steady aim, I put a bullet through his brain. With a growl of rage and pain the bear gradually relaxed his hold on Bust and fell over, dead. Bust, from loss of blood and pain, fell over in a faint.

In the meantime, the other bear, having unearthed the bacon, was waltzing around on his hind feet with a large piece between his two front paws, enjoying his

feast with occasional grunts of satisfaction as he viciously bit into it, the fat dripping off on either side of his jaw. Having noticed the fateful end that overtook his friend and partner in the raid, he dropped the bacon in rage and made an onslaught on me, who hastily taking aim, discharged my last bullet into the brute's shoulder with apparently little effect, except that of increasing the bear's rage and accelerating his speed. I realized the disadvantage I was in, my last bullet being fired. The bear was between me and the tent, thus blocking the way to where the ammunition was stored. I still had my hunting knife to defend myself with. My revolvers I had left in the camp when I started on my walk up the stream that morning, not thinking I would need them,—a foolish thing for me to do in such a wild country.

The ground where we had made our temporary home, was in the form of a wedge made so by the confluence of the two streams, and was studded with heavy pine trees. The unconscious Bust and I were hemmed in by the streams on either side, on the apex of this wedge, the tent being located on the opposite, or thick end. To the left of a line, between me and the bear, were two big trees standing on the bank of one of the streams. Behind one of these I decided to run to gain the first point of vantage. Gripping my hunting knife in my right hand I made a dash for the tree. The bear, seeming to divine my plan, tried to head me off. I got there first, and without stopping to consider made a bound for the other one, distant about ten feet. I had now gained a decided advantage over the bear, reversing our relative positions. I had still a good distance to cover in order to reach the tent, and on clear ground I wouldn't have stood a chance with the bear as a competitor in the race. By running in and out amongst the trees I hoped to baffle the bear, thus giving me a

chance to reach the tent and pick up some weapon of defense. All this I took in while I was running between the first and second trees, the bear meanwhile being in hot chase.

Casting a glance over my shoulder, I noticed with dismay that the bear was fast gaining on me. Before I reached the tent I had to cover a clear space of about fifty yards in length. Here was the crucial point where my life might depend on my ability in handling my hunting knife. Just as I gained the edge of the clearance, dashing out from a big tree, the last one, I discovered a stout rope, coiled up, lying near its trunk. Hastily snatching it up, I ran at right angles to my former course, along the edge of the clearance, thus gaining on the bear, which nearly tumbled over in his clumsy effort to check his speed.

The rope which I had so opportunely found, proved a weapon of no mean defense. Before I had time to tie and adjust the noose the bear was again in hot pursuit. Dashing in and out amongst the trees, adjusting the noose and coiling the rope properly, the bear after me, growling in rage, I at last saw my opportunity. Gaining a clear spot amongst the trees, I suddenly faced about. The bear being taken by surprise at this new front by the enemy, reared on his hind legs, thus giving me the opportunity I desired. The rope hissed through the air, the noose settling over the bear's head, I gave it a sudden jerk to tighten it. The rope proved a new proposition to the bear. Not understanding its cause nor effect, instead of continuing the chase after me he now gave his attention to this new enemy. While the bear was vainly trying to free himself from the rope, I wound the loose end around the trunk of a tree and tied it.

"Now, Mr. Bear, while you are enjoying yourself with the rope, I'll see if I can't circumvent you! as

Uncle would say."

Fearing that the bear might break the rope, I hurried to procure a rifle and my revolvers in order to finish the enemy. The bear, seeing me return with a new weapon in my hands, made frantic efforts to get at me. Getting up on his haunches, the brute gave a sudden, violent jerk, throwing his whole weight and strength into the rope. It gave way with a snap, one end flying back toward the tree where it was tied, while the bear, with the other end around his neck, was rolling on the ground. Hastily scrambling to his feet, the bear, now being free, seemed to fairly laugh as he made a rush for me. I, who realized that everything now depended on cool courage, took steady aim for the bear's eye. The bear was within ten feet of me. Crack! I jumped to one side as the bear rushed by me sorely wounded. Crack! Went my rifle again. This time the bear went down with the spinal-cord severed.

Now that I was safe, with both enemies down and out, I betook myself to examine my friend's condition. I found him still unconscious. On examination of my partner's wounds, I found them not as dangerous as at first supposed. Mixing a little brandy with water, I dropped a few drops of this down Bust's throat, which soon produced a change.

"How are you, Bust?" I asked him as he slowly opened his eyes shortly after, with a vacant stare. "You had a pretty narrow escape this time. That old bear was just determined to show his affection for you. I just happened to come in the nick of time, too."

"Yes Los, I feel as though my whole backbone was dislocated. He certainly hung on to me. Where is the old parasite, anyway?"

"There he lies on your other side."

"What became of the other one? There were two, I remember."

"Oh, the other one took the same journey. I had quite a little time to convince him of his folly in ransacking other people's castles. In fact, he tried to convince me that I was in the wrong. It was a neck to neck race for a while to see who'd reach the tent first. I finally had to tie him to a tree until I could get my persuaders. When I came back he broke loose. Then you should have seen him trying to hug me. It seems to me, bears have a fondness for hugging. I think I'd better get you over to the tent and dress up your scratches a little, so as to make you look more presentable to Uncle and the Kid when they return."

Assisting Bust to his feet, I slipped my arm around him and thus supported him on our way to the tent, where I proceeded to dress his wounds, in the meantime telling him of my find up the run.

"I tell you, Bust, we'll all soon be traveling in John D's footsteps."

Bust took a great interest in my golden narrative, and it served as a powerful tonic on his over-wrought nerves.

"It will make the Kid's mouth water when he hears the tale," he said.

"Yes, and it will serve to put the old man in better humor, now since our bacon is gone," I answered.

"Yes, he'd never get over that fact if we wouldn't have the gold story to trump it with."

Toward evening Uncle and the Kid returned without anything encouraging to report.

"Hello, what's this?" Uncle exclaimed as he saw Bust lying on a bed of blankets with his head all bandaged up.

"He's been playing with a bear, Uncle, and got tickled a little too hard. Nothing serious. He'll be around in a few days."

I related to Uncle and the Kid the whole story from

the time they left until their return, with the exception of my discovery, which I held in reserve as a final card until after Uncle had blown himself.

"And all our bacon gone? I'll be hanged!" deploring the loss with a shake of the head.

"Not exactly," I answered.

"How do you make that out? You just told me the bear ate it," Uncle snapped.

"Well, haven't we got the bear?" I answered with a peculiar smile on my face. "Can't we eat the bear? Then we'll have bear, bacon and all. Uncle, it's of no use being grouchy about it," I said, playfully slapping him on the back. "I have another little tale to tell you—some little wayside story with a golden border.—Listen sharp, Kid," addressing the youngster who by this time had mouth, ears and eyes open.

Uncle, who seldom showed much emotion, and who usually took things in a matter-of-fact way, nevertheless pricked up his ears considerably as I proceeded with my narrative.

"Tell me all about it. Tell me all about it, boy," he used to exclaim whenever I stopped to take breath. "It certainly is a wonderful story—too good to believe—almost. Won't you be having hallucinations tonight, Kid?"

"It's simply glorious, Uncle," the Kid shouted, slapping his thighs gleefully. "I'm going to negotiate for another cattle-ranch as soon as I see the proof of Los' story."

"Here's the proof," I said reaching into my pocket and drawing out some of the shining flakes.

"Did you get them up there?" Uncle asked eagerly as he got out his knife and separated them on the palm of his hand with the blade.

"Yes, I'd have gotten some more if I wouldn't have been called away on more important business," I said

significantly nodding toward Bust.

"How far up the creek is this place?" inquired Uncle.

"About half a mile," I replied.

"We'll have to investigate tomorrow morning."

The following morning Uncle and the Kid started early on their way up the stream in search of the place where I had described having found the treasure. In about two hours' time they returned, bringing a capful of sand, mixed with the shining little flakes, along.

"Los, I've laid my eyes on some pretty scenery in my time, but never anything like this. This beats the old Nick at his own game. Say, we'll all be buying cattle-ranches before long, eh? It's almost a shame to take it, that easy it is. Here Bust, wake up, and let the light shine into your eyes. Here's what we'll pay ourselves with for what wasn't coming to us last year.

"Now, boys, we'll have to hustle and erect a good substantial shanty before winter sets down on us. And here's where you get the real unadulterated kind, direct from the factory. I've seen it so cold in this country that the howls froze in the wolves' throats and choked them to death."

For about two weeks our axes rang throughout the forests and mountains. Everything was made snug and tidy because, as Uncle said:

"We're going to plant ourselves and stay right here."

Bust's wounds had soon healed and everyone was jolly and healthy. We had built our cabin up the stream, near the place where we intended to work. Before winter set in we had panned several thousand dollars worth of dust. After cold weather came, and we could no more work the stream, we began to drift down into the side of the mountain, throwing the dirt out on a pile, to be panned the following spring.

CHAPTER VIII

THAT first winter in Alaska was an eye-opener to me, so far as its rigor was concerned. And yet, I enjoyed it immensely. So did the Kid. Often times he and I would roll ourselves in the dry snow for very excess of joy. He and I became fast companions and many a hunting trip we made together after venison and other game, seldom returning without having bagged some animal to supply us with fresh meat.

The long evenings I spent mostly in studying the Scriptures. I was thirsting for that Spiritual light whereby I might be enabled eventually to solve the riddle that continually harassed my mind. I was turning into a mystic, and the deeper I delved into the mysteries of "Occult Science" the more fascinated I became with it. It had already opened unto me a vast book of hidden secrets, the import of which at that time, so far as they concerned me and my past, forgotten life, I failed to understand. Not until some years later were their true meanings revealed to me.

I read and studied the miracles of Moses, the vision he had on Mt. Sinai when the Lord spake to him; I read the wonderful prophecies of Daniel and Isaiah—the dreams and visions they had. All were divinely gifted with a knowledge of that science for which my soul yearned.

Often times, at night, while lying in my bunk and everything was still, so perfectly quiet I seemed to feel its oppressive calm hanging suspended over me like some ponderous weight, I placed myself into that negative state whereby I submerged my Objective Mind and allowed my Subconscious Self to rise to the threshold

and enable me to see with my spiritual eyes those things which I felt positive would some day reveal unto me the secrets of my past.

As the winter passed, those visions became more frequent. During those times I was in another world. They took me into far off countries, and amongst scenes of which I had no recollection. But they gave me unbounded pleasure as they passed in review before my occult eyes.

One night as I thus lay in that half conscious state I had a vision such as I had not had before. I felt certain it was a message of direct import to me. It affected me deeply for long afterward. Yet in that total, blank state of consciousness I was in, regarding my past, what was I to do? How was I to act? I might travel to the four corners of the earth and still fail to locate the place where the actual scene happened. The scene was so real, I shall never forget it.

I had another vision of that village I had seen while gazing into the placid waters of the little pool where I had discovered the flakes of gold, and near which we had now built our cabin.

It was a beautiful, mild day in autumn. The leaves of the trees had taken on their beautiful autumn colors. In that village there was a modest little home, the yard in front of which was neatly and well kept. And as I looked, I saw a double team tied to the hitching post. And then my vision took me into a little room, and there I saw that little child with the curls and her mother whose face looked so sad and careworn, but resigned. In front of her stood a man, a tall, strongly-built man who was talking to her, emphasizing his speech with profuse gestures. I saw him take up the child and kiss her and speak to her. I saw him place the child on her feet once more and then address himself to the mother. I saw him become more vociferous,

and finally menacing toward her. I saw the mother flush red in the face, and I saw her stamp her foot and point toward the door. And then I saw him assault her, and in selfdefense she reached out with her hand and fought him like a tigress at bay. I saw blood streaming down his face, and then he struck her. I saw her body strike the stove and then fall to the floor. I saw the child bending over her, crying, while the man stood quietly looking on, with his back toward the door.

And I saw a young man cross the threshold of the door. He was a man of medium height but very strongly built, with light, flaxen hair. I saw him crouch up to the man with his back toward the door and presently his right hand shot out and he took hold of the other man's neck and swung him round toward him. I saw him speak to the woman and to the man and then the two men passed out of the room. And presently I saw the two cross the road to a small plot of grass, and there the young man knocked the other man down. The blood was streaming out of his nose as he rose onto his feet. And I saw the young man knock him down once more and then all was over. The vision had vanished.

The long winter with its long nights and short days—in fact no days at all for a time—came to an end at last, reversing the nocturnal and diurnal time. I became restless and nervous, and easily excited. The visions I had had and which had become more and more distinct the oftener I had them, began to prey upon my already agitated mind. I longed for action, not the action required by my daily toil in the drift, but the action that would call me away, that would keep me on the move. I felt as though I would willingly once more brave the wide stretch of the desert, once more going through the terrible experience of suffering I had passed through in crossing it, if only I might solve the

import of these visions. I was chafing like a horse at the bit.

The rest began to notice the change in me. From a spirit of gayety, I had changed into one of sullenness and oftentimes moroseness.

One day when I was in one of these moods—a most malignant one—Uncle put the question which I had for sometime anticipated, directly up to me.

“Los, what is the matter with you?”

“Nothing,” I answered curtly, unduly irritated at the question.

“Yes, there is something wrong. You are down-hearted and sullen. Something is preying on your mind. Let us take a walk,” he continued.

Together we walked down the little creek to that triangular piece of ground where we had first camped, and where I killed the two bears. Here we sat down on a log which we had hewn during our short stay.

“Now tell me your trouble,” he said. “We befriended you, we acted the Good Samaritan to you, and we confided in you when in your hour of greatest distress, when even the friendship of a dog would have been a God-send to you. On the bond of such a friendship you have a right to take me into your confidence and tell me your trouble. Whatever it is the secret shall be inviolate. Is the dead ghost of the past rising before you and haunting you? Your past life, deeds that you would prefer should remain buried, are they encroaching upon your memory once more?”

“No, not that, Uncle,” I replied sadly. “Were that the case, I would shout for very joy. Black as those deeds might be, I would hail their remembrance with satisfaction. I would spend my whole remaining days in atoning for them.”

He took my hand in his in friendly clasp and looked me straight in the eyes with those steel-gray ones of his.

It was one of those steady, determined looks which he sometimes gave the Kid when occasion demanded.

"Well then what in the nation is it? I must know."

I quailed before his gaze. Not so much on account of that as the expression on his face—that old, far-distant, familiar expression, accompanied by the equally far-distant, familiar by-word he used in putting the question.

Then I told him all. I told him of the book I had read, treating of the "Subjective Mind," given to me by the old farmer in Pennsylvania; I told him of the visions I had had and how they affected me and impressed me. When I had done, he asked:

"Is that all that is troubling you?"

"Yes, that is all," I answered.

"I also read on that subject. I finally threw the book away in disgust. I came to the conclusion that this life was too material, founded on too rock-bottomed facts for us to have it disturbed by such vapory hallucinations. Dreams do not disturb me, neither does dyspepsia rack my stomach. Let us go back. Shake it off. Forget it."

"One word more, Uncle, and then we will forget this conversation. I hope, yes, I sincerely believe before you and I part, either in life or in death, these dreams, hallucinations as you call them, will some day stand revealed to me as truthful messages, messages which my own soul tries so hard to reveal to my conscious self and which my memory fails so utterly to recollect and understand. Even you, Uncle, show something about you sometimes that seems familiar to me; something I had seen or heard in the far distant past."

He looked at me quizzically.

"But let us forget that too, for the present. Who knows, perhaps some day in the future I may recollect where and when I have seen you before in years gone by," I said.

Strange, how we speak words of truth and wisdom sometimes in our ignorance.

By this time we arrived at the cabin and we dropped the subject.

Henceforth I determined to shake this distressing feeling off and forced myself to appear more gay and pleasant. I kept my own counsel, but at night when everything was quiet and I could commune with myself undisturbed, I tried to get visions. And I did receive many of them; many things were revealed to me through telepathic agency, all of which were proven truthful years afterward.

During the day I worked with pick and shovel like a slave, neither sparing myself nor wishing to be spared. It was real rest to my mind. It helped me to forget in that it occupied it with the work at hand.

CHAPTER IX

“**B**OYS, I’m going on an excursion to-day. Who’ll accompany me? I intend to be gone all day. This is too much of a stationary job for me, to be tied down six days in a week, week in and week out without any spice for variety,” I said one Sunday morning after breakfast.

It was in early September. The air was crisp, dry and bracing, and the sky was clear, with a bright sun shining down between the mountains tops. It was just such a day as infuses life and ambition into a vigorous, robust man. None of the rest volunteered to accompany me as I shouldered my rifle and hurriedly passed out of sight down the little stream.

I enjoyed this tramp through the mountains by myself. I loved to be alone once in a while, where I could commune with myself, free from the intrusive thoughts of others. We had been in this cold, inhospitable region somewhat more than three years, without meeting a single solitary person, barring the few times we had made trips to one of the “Hudson Bay Co.’s,” posts for provisions. We had worked hard in search of gold ever since we had pitched our camp, and had been successful even beyond the Kid’s dreams, which we know were flighty enough. The gold had panned out in such quantities as to make veritable gluttons of us all.

I decided to explore a little of the country to-day,—some new section, where I had never been before. I followed the stream for about two hours, about six or seven miles, when I came to the mouth of another small stream. It was just such another little stream, like the one we had pitched our home on. Up this creek,

through the mountains, I wended my way. I had followed its course for about three miles, when I suddenly and unexpectedly came upon a snug little cabin built in a niche of the mountain.

"Hello, I thought we were the only ones in these diggings. I see we have neighbors."

My first thought was to make a secret investigation before showing myself, but on second thought I decided to approach boldly and knock.

"Who is out?" came the inquiry, in a sharp but pleasant female voice, in answer to my knock.

"A friend," I answered. "Would you mind opening?"

The door slowly opened. I was so completely taken by surprise, I forgot I had a tongue to speak with. In front of me stood a young woman with a rifle in her hands, pointed directly at my chest.

Here in this cold, bleak country, thousands of miles from civilization, I discovered one of its rarest flowers.

"Ah, pardon me, lady, if I intrude. The fact is I stumbled upon your home unexpectedly. I did not know we had such a charming neighbor," I apologized.

"Did you say we? Are you not alone, then? Where are your friends?" she inquired.

"My friends? I left them at home, over yonder about ten miles. I started out alone this morning on a little exploring expedition, and thus I happen to be looking into the barrel of your rifle. I hope you'll oblige me by lowering it.— Have no fear, lady," I said as she hesitated. "I announce myself as a friend, and would not harm a hair on your head. You must pardon me for my rude stare, but you are really the first human being I've seen for a long, long time,—I mean, one that really looked good to me."

"I hardly understand you," she answered. "You surely cannot be tired of seeing your friends?"

"No, not exactly; I remember the first time I met them; they were certainly delightful things to look upon. But then you know even the faces of our friends become monotonous sometimes, especially when they are of the ordinary, every day variety. It's like looking at a piece of brass; at first it's bright and shiny, like a piece of gold, later on it becomes dull and tarnished, and represents no more than a piece of old junk to one, whereas a diamond, one can always see some new scintillations or blending of rays that you had never seen before. A rainbow always looks beautiful, whether you see it in the morning or evening. But, pardon me, you surely do not live all by yourself in this lonesome spot?"

"No, sir, I don't think I'd have the courage to exist all by myself here. I have a brother living with me, whom I expect back almost any minute. He went out this morning in search of game, and—"

"You stayed home to entertain lonely strangers and keep house I presume."

"Well, yes, I suppose you might put it that way," she answered with a smile.

"You come from the States?" I inquired.

"Yes, we come from Chicago. We came up here four years ago, my brother and I, in search of fortune and adventure. It's only the last two that we've located up here; previous to that my brother worked a claim down at Dawson. It's through some circumstances which I may not explain that we are here."

"Don't you find it very lonesome in this spot?—so Godforsaken lonely!"

"Well, yes, I do sometimes. Of course we expect to go back to the States before long,—that is, in a few years. Pardon me, but you must be hungry after your tramp. Let me make you a cup of tea, and—take a seat; you must be very tired," pointing to a rude chair.

I didn't wait for a second bidding of this nature. A cup of tea—from her hands? Delightful!—and so romantic! Besides I was becoming conscious of a voracious appetite. I drew up my rude chair, expressing my thanks in a flowery little speech while I stretched out my sturdy limbs.

"Hello pardner, how are you doing?"

I had just been in the act of raising the cup to my lips, when I was arrested by the words coming from the direction of the doorway. Hastily setting it down, I turned and faced the author, a tall, wiry built man, somewhat resembling the girl in features.

"How'd d'ye do," I returned the greeting.

"That's my brother," the young lady interrupted.

"I am greatly pleased to meet you. Your sister, whose kind hospitality I have accepted, told me you were out after some game. Hope you have been successful. I started out this morning with the same intention without any success in that line; however, I have found something far more pleasing to my hunter's eye," making at the same time a sweeping bow before the young lady. "I stumbled accidentally upon your habitation here, being quite ignorant of the proximity of such delightful neighbors."

"Then you live in these parts, too, do you?" the brother asked. "I imagined Sister and I were quite alone in these parts."

"Yes, my friends and I live about ten miles distant,—up the other creek," nodding my head in the direction indicated.

"Working a claim?" the brother asked.

"Yes, I suppose you are doing the same thing."

"Trying to. Poor panning; very poor. Sister and I have been thinking of locating further up, in way of changing luck. Why, it's going to snow!"

My attention had been so riveted by my new found

friends that I had entirely failed to note the change of the weather. I was, therefore, not very agreeably surprised when my attention was so suddenly directed toward it.

"Gee, I must be going!" I exclaimed, making a rush for the door.

"Keep cool, my friend, keep cool," said the brother laying a detaining hand on me. "Is this your first winter in Alaska?"

"No, this is my third," I answered.

"And you don't know yet what a snow storm in Alaska means? Why man, you'd never get home alive. You can't see ten feet ahead of you now," he said as he opened the door to look out. "Listen to the wind howling. Take my advice, partner, and stay right here, where you're safe. Besides, it'll do sister and me good to talk about old times."

"But my friends! I'll be causing trouble all around."

"You won't give any trouble here, stranger, and as for your friends, it's better to be worried and find you alive, than to be worried and find you a corpse afterward."

If I could have eliminated the trouble I occasioned my friends, nothing would have given me greater pleasure than to spend the night in the company of these two young people, especially the young lady, whom I found very charming and cultured. I found them both well educated and refined, and entirely free from the jargon I was so accustomed to hear from Uncle and others of his rough but honest class. My friends, no doubt, would give me up for lost. At the same time, I reasoned, in this country, one must be brave and hardy enough to meet any and all kinds of circumstances and misfortunes. Why should they worry? I had demonstrated to them, time and again that I was able to take care of myself under the most trying circumstances.

With that I dismissed my friends from my mind.

We became very good friends, and talked late into the night, discoursing on various subjects. During the course of the evening, I gave them the history of my experience, so far as I remembered, my friends doing likewise. They evinced great surprise and interest in my experiences and mental loss, Miss Bristow—that being their name—especially being very sympathetic in her expressions; a fact, which in itself would have increased my estimation of her fifty per cent. if that were possible. In the morning, after wakening, I opened the door, to find that it had stopped snowing. The wind had gone down, but the air was dry and intensely cold. After breakfast I thanked them profusely for their hospitality and gave them a hearty good-bye, with the remark:

“I hope we may meet again,” addressing the words especially to Miss Bristow.

“I hope we will,” she answered. “You must be sure and try to see us again next spring, if unable to do so this winter.”

“Thank you, I certainly will if I live that long. Good-bye,” I called as I started to wade through the deep snow toward my own cabin.

When about half way on my journey, I met Uncle and the Kid in search for me, expecting to find my corpse.

“Where have you been hibernating through all this snow bluster,” Uncle asked. “When everybody is expecting to find your body frozen stiff,—here you bob up as serene as a smoked herring in June. We were nearly worried to death all night about you. The Kid wanted to start out last night for you, but Lord! you couldn’t see your hand before your face, that bad it was. Tell us about yourself.

“I will, Uncle, as soon as you give me a chance to

get in a word cat-a-corner. To solve the most important doubt in your mind, then—I stayed with friends.”

This was like the explosion of a bomb.

“With friends!” Uncle and the Kid both exclaimed together.

“You both heard me right. With friends; real live friends, like you and I,—and, Oh Lord, Uncle!” giving him a resounding slap on the shoulder, “I came in contact with the prettiest female specimen I’ve ever had the good fortune to lay my eyes on. It would do your shriveled up, weazened old soul a pile of good to look upon her. She’s an angel, I tell you.”

“An angel! I’ve never seen the woman yet that hadn’t some little mischief chained fast in her heart. If you knew women folks as well as I do, you wouldn’t be so apt to lose your head at first sight of one. An angel! Say Los, if it was the Kid, here, I wouldn’t think so much of it,—but you!—to go daffy on a petticoat at first sight,—why it’s simply preposterous.”

This sarcastic speech from Uncle, nettled me a little.

“Uncle, the people don’t all look at things through your narrow windows, and I hope some day you may be compelled to swallow some of your words. For your Mother’s sake,—and I hope you once had a mother—you ought to use more respectful language in speaking of women. You have not offended me, but you have insulted that young lady in whom I have taken a particular interest. Because you have met a few of the worst in your time isn’t said that they all belong to that class. We won’t argue anymore about the girl. Let’s hurry home and convince Bust that I’m still alive and kicking. I want to go to work and dig, dig, dig for all I’m worth. I’ve been a fool these last five years, I tell you. She opened my eyes and showed me where my duty lay.”

Bust was overjoyed to find me safe and sound. We all ate a hearty breakfast, after which we started for the drift, I taking the lead, determinedly grabbed my pick and shovel. I seemed to be infused with new life. No more dilly-dallying with me. For days, weeks and months—all that winter, I kept at it, hardly taking time to eat or sleep. The bitter cold seemed to have no effect on me. We had drifted down about twenty feet when we struck bed-rock, from where we ramified in all directions into the heart of the mountain. By spring we had an immense pile of dirt which we commenced to pan as soon as the weather became favorable. Day after day our hoardings increased. We gloated over it like starving dogs over a bone. About the girl, I never mentioned a word. I had determined, however, to renew our short acquaintance at the earliest opportunity.

CHAPTER X

EARLY one Sunday morning, when the days were almost at their longest, I took my rifle and set out to fulfill the promise I had made Miss Bristow—that of paying them a visit in spring.

“Where are you going, Los?” Uncle inquired.

“Oh, I’m going for a stroll. And don’t get worried about me if I’m not back by the time you see the sun to the north of you. There’ll be no snow storm today.”

“Hum-mm, is that the way the breeze blows this morning? Well I wish you success, Los,—but say, don’t get lost in the meshes of her hair.”

“No fear, Uncle,” I answered back in a jolly sort of way, as I hurried down along the creek with a springy gait, my whole body aglow with the fire that raged in my heart.

I wouldn’t as yet admit, even to myself that I was in love. Oh no! This was only a friendly call I was going to make. The reason I was in such a hurry was,—well, because I felt extra good this morning. And besides, hadn’t I been driving myself like this all winter? Besides,—I tried hard to persuade myself,—didn’t I set out to see Mr. Bristow? Because his sister was living with him was no fault of mine. I slackened my pace as I neared their cabin, for fear they would notice my impatience, the door standing wide open. As I came up to the door I found her sitting at the rude table with her back turned toward me, reading a book. For one whole minute I stood there unnoticed and unheard, admiring her long golden hair, which almost reached the floor.

“Good-morning,” I saluted her pleasantly.

She jumped up with a start and faced me.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Name? We thought you had forgotten all about us. My brother and I were talking about you this morning."

"The old saying is: 'When you think of Satan, his Imp is sure to follow!'"

"Well, Mr. Name! I'm sure we never thought of you in that way. But, come in and take a seat. It's nicer in here than out there in the warm sun. My brother went up the gulch and may not be back for sometime. Often times he stays all day, on a nice day like this."

"I'm sorry he is not at home. I took a great liking to him the first time I was here," I answered, for want of something better to say.

Not for the world would I have her to think that I came expressly to see her. She might think me a little too premature.

"By the way, Mr. Name, how did you get home the morning after the snow storm? Were your friends worried very much about you?"

"I met them half way home, out on the search for me. They expected to find a frozen body. They were very much surprised when I told them of the hospitable neighbors I had found. If it wasn't so far I'd invite you and your brother up sometime."

"How is your claim doing, Mr. Name?"

"Right well, thank you. If it keeps on panning like it's doing now, we'll be able to leave the country in a few years, at the longest. How is yours doing?" I asked her.

"Not as well as it was doing at first. Brother thinks of changing our location."

"By the way, what are you reading, Miss Bristow," I asked glancing at the book now lying on the table.

"Why I have just finished reading Emerson's Essay

on 'Success.' Do you read much, Mr. Name?"

"I am very fond of reading, and I deplore the fact of not having a single book amongst our whole stock in trade, with the exception of the Bible. That of course, as you know, is the book of books and should satisfy a man's wants. But I really become very hungry sometimes for something else to read. I do not know how I came to forget to bring several along with us when we set out three years ago."

"I'd be very glad to loan you some of mine if you can find any interesting ones among them. Come here, I'll show you what I have."

She led me to the farther end of the room. She deftly drew aside a blue, silk curtain, behind which I discovered a whole shelf full of the best ancient and modern classics.

"It is but a very modest collection, Mr. Name," she said by way of apology.

I ran my eyes over the choice collection, reading the titles aloud: Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Tennyson, Longfellow and Walt Whitman, amongst the poets; Hugo, Sue, Scott, Dickens, Thackeray, Hawthorne, Holmes' Autocrat Series, and the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini.

"My! but you have a choice selection, Miss Bristow. Some of them I have read. That old farmer I stayed with, the first winter after coming out of the hospital, had a very fine collection of books and I read nearly all of them. The 'Life of Benvenuto Cellini,' is it interesting?"

"Very much so. It is considered the most fascinating autobiography ever written. He was a Florentine gold-beater and sculptor; a man endowed with the two extremes in nature. In reading it you will be impressed with his good and evil geniuses, alternately. At one moment he is the saint, at the next he is the exact

opposite. If you wish to read it you may take it with you, and any others you may desire."

"Thank you very kindly. I will take it, and one of Emerson's if you please."

We kept on talking thus until well into the afternoon, when I decided it was time for me to leave.

"Are you not afraid of staying all by yourself, Miss Bristow?"

"Oh no, I often stay alone. I have a very good friend here, and I know how to use it. Let me show you. Do you see that little twig, hanging by a shred of bark, down on that big pine tree?"

"Yes, I see it, but you surely don't mean—"

What else I was going to say, Miss Bristow did not stop to listen. My words were sharply cut short by the crack of her rifle, the little twig falling to the ground.

"Miss Bristow, you are a wonder. It's exactly fifty paces," I said, after stepping it off.

"I have done better than that, Mr. Name. But I think that will convince you that this little pet and I have known each other longer than to-day."

"I wish Uncle could see that," I said partly to myself and partly to her.

"Uncle? Who is uncle?" she inquired.

"Oh, he is one of my three friends. He has some queer notions that kind of jar on my nerves sometimes; good, honest soul, though, he is. Well, Miss Bristow, I surely must be going. I bid you good-bye."

She reached out her delicate hand, which became completely lost as I lingeringly held it in my big brawny fist. It affected me like an electric shock passing through my body. I noticed two bright red spots on her cheeks as our eyes met, each guessing the other's secret. Not pretending any longer that I came to see her brother, I found myself gone completely, over this

bewitching damsel with the golden hair. My heart began to beat like a hammer. I stood there like a little school boy reciting his first nursery rhyme. Several times I began to stammer something unintelligible.

She watched me, a smile playing around her pretty mouth.

Finally I controlled myself.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bristow, but indeed you are so good to look at; you are such a splendid, such a superb girl!"

"Please do not flatter me, Mr. Name. It is something I do not care for."

"Believe me, I am sincere in what I say. Flattery is something I do not indulge in. In fact, I am sometimes too plain spoken in expressing my convictions. But do you know, I feel lonesome sometimes? So infernally lonesome! If I could only clear up this mystery surrounding me. It weighs upon me like a millstone around my neck. In every step I might take that would conduce to my happiness I have to take this thing into consideration, because I expect some day my past will be fully cleared up, good, bad or indifferent."

"I feel sincerely sorry for you, Mr. Name. I can fully realize the disadvantage you are laboring under, and I hope and pray that some day you may find yourself again, and your mystery fully cleared up to your happiness and advantage."

"Thank you very kindly for your good wishes, Miss Bristow. I must be off now. There is one more favor I would like you to grant me."

"What is it?"

"That I may come to see you sometimes, to talk to you and to hear you talk. Believe me it will give me more happiness than anything else."

"Certainly you may. I shall always be very glad to see you, and so will my brother Charlie be. We have

often discussed you since that first time you've been here—the time of the snow storm.”

“Thank you sincerely. I shall certainly be here to see you before so very long. I must be going now. Good-day.”

“Good-day, Mr. Name.”

“Golly, but she's a peach: I believe I could enjoy life with that girl in this country. My! but I got warm under my vest when she looked into my eyes like that. I wonder what my share of the pile amounts to by this time. I'll have to ask Uncle.”

And with that I remembered the Kid. I also was building air-castles now,—only of a different nature.

CHAPTER XI

I MADE regular calls on Miss Bristow after this. Many a pleasant stroll we had up and down the gulch while her brother was trying to locate a better claim. During the week I worked like a slave, Miss Bristow's friendship for me acting as a stimulus far beyond what the mere lust for gold could have done.

Sometimes when I thought of my doubtful position, and the bearing it might have on my future, I became gloomy and morose, resenting all kindly interference by my friends, in short and snappy answers. I even felt sometimes as though I could curse someone or something for being the cause of my mental state.

"What's the matter with you, Los?" inquired Uncle of me one morning, as I showed a particularly resentful and morose spirit. "You're not at all anymore the boy you used to be, since you've gone daffy on that girl. Did you have a fight and get the g. b.—or has the Angel taken flight and gone to Heaven? You look as gloomy and down and out in the mouth as though you had been chief mourner at a funeral. Come, brush up, brush up. Be like you always used to be."

"Uncle, I'm not gloomy, morose, or down in the mouth on account of anything either one of you have done against me. You have all been the very best of friends to me; the truest I've ever had, probably. But there's something else on my mind that gives me considerable food for reflection. Some day I may tell you, not now. I'm not on the outs with the girl, either. We are the very best of friends."

The following Sunday morning, I made my usual weekly call on Miss Bristow. When I arrived, I found

her putting the cabin in order, whilst her brother was making preparations for his usual Sunday perambulations. They both greeted me affectionately.

"I see, I happen to be just in time before your usual Sunday stroll," I addressed the brother.

"Yes, five minutes later would have missed me," Bristow answered. "However, I think Sis will be able to entertain you in my absence."

"Don't stay away so late, Charlie. I don't think it's right for you to be out like this every Sunday. After a while you'll lose all respect for the Sabbath," Miss Bristow interposed.

"I know, but then we don't intend to live all our lives in this forsaken country. So don't worry, Sis; I won't stay late today. So long. Good-bye, Mr. Name."

"Good-bye, Mr. Bristow. Isn't this a lovely day, Miss Bristow? What do you say to taking a walk this morning? It's almost too nice to stay in the house."

"Why yes, I was just on the point of proposing it. There's a nice shady spot up the stream a piece way. We might take a stroll up there. A walk will do me good."

"By the way, Miss Bristow, do you believe in dreams?" I asked her while she was continuing her housework.

"Indeed, I don't know. My aunt used to say, dreams never came true; I'm sure mine don't, at least. Why do you ask? Are you troubled with bad dreams, Mr. Name?"

"No, on the contrary, I had a real pleasant one; the bad feature about it is, I can't put it together. If I could,—well, it makes no difference I suppose. I'll tell you. About two weeks ago one night, a beautiful vision appeared to me;—remember, I'm only telling you as I seem to remember it,—well, this vision had thick, long golden hair, like yours. On her head, she wore a dia-

dem beset with various precious stones, which emitted sparks of fire as she turned her head. She was dressed in a long, flowing, white robe,—dazzling white,—tied with a blue girdle around her waist. She called me her dear boy, and I thought she stroked my forehead and temples with her beautiful white hand. Every time she touched my forehead it appeared as though she removed a thin veil like a cob-web, and my memory seemed to clear. She called me by name, and said, ‘Jim, why are you so sad? Why are you out here in this faraway, cold country; faraway from your loved ones who have been waiting, waiting for you for so long? The time is at hand my dear boy; go home, you are wanted.’ And then I thought I asked her who she was, and she said, ‘your Mother,—your guardian Angel, who has shielded you all these years;’ and then she took my face between her hands and kissed me. And I remember having asked her, ‘Mother, whither must I go to find them? I am lost, lost to everybody; I don’t know where to look for them.’ I remember distinctly she told me who I was and where I came from, but I can’t recollect any more. And then I dreamed she took me by the hand, and together we took a long journey over high mountains, deep valleys, and beautiful lakes and rivers. We finally arrived in a beautiful little valley, surrounded by beautiful, green mountains and silvery streams flowing through it. She pointed to a modest little house with a nice little yard in front, in which all kinds of beautiful flowers were blooming. ‘This is your home,’ she said. ‘You’ll find your loved ones inside, my boy; they are thinking of you.’ With that she gave me another kiss and, she was gone. That is all I remember:—the most beautiful dream I’ve ever had. The house, the little yard with its blooming flowers;—all that I can see distinctly; but where it is,—that’s the rub. There may, and there may not exist

such a place. Even my name I can't recall. The remembrance of that would make everything easy. Sometimes I think I have it, then, just as I am on the point of grasping it, psss! like a will-o-the-wisp, it's gone. It reminds me of trying to recall a word or name. When you think you have it on your tongue, it skidoos, and you can't recall it to save your soul."

"Dreams are wonderful things, Mr. Name, and I don't believe anybody knows the true psychological cause or effect of them. What you saw in your dream may be a true picture of a part of your former history; still, it may be but a phantasm due to a disordered stomach, meaning nothing. If it is the former, I believe it will be revealed to you in a more lucid way some day; if the latter, nothing will ever come of it. I would not be cast down on account of it; I'd just let things take their course."

"Your talk is both reasonable and logical, Miss Bristow; still, you cannot feel about it like I do. I am always, more or less restricted in my actions, even as to planning them. There is always that paramount thought in my mind that something may turn up unexpectedly, placing me in a very embarrassing position. I assure you it is not a very pleasant picture to look at when you begin to size it up from the four corners."

"I admit all that. But then sizing it up from the four corners, as you say, why must you worry your soul about something you are not the cause of; or at least, something you are unable to alter. I believe all things turn out for our good, eventually. They say we shape our own destiny. That may be, but all the theologians in the world cannot make me believe that there is not something back to shape that destiny, down to its minutest detail. Insignificant little things or acts that are forgotten the moment after, sometimes lead to momentous events. Why were you in that particular

car, on that particular time when there were probably dozens of others for you to creep in. There certainly was a cause for it. Had you foreknown the results, you no doubt would have modified or changed your course, and your soul might be by this time calm and serene. Therefore, I can't see why you shouldn't be allowed to act as though nothing stood in your way."

This opinion, coming from Miss Bristow especially, did much to allay my doubts and fears, although knowing the sentiments she entertained for me, I could not conscientiously accept it as an impartial opinion. Not that I doubted her loyalty to her own convictions, yet I had not been slow to read in her eyes the secret that her maidenly modesty would have prevented her from telling me in words. The subject under discussion was sharply brought to a halt by a new factor appearing on the scene; one of such far reaching results to both of us that it prevented it from ever being brought up again.

CHAPTER XII

MISS BRISTOW was standing against the table, facing the door, which stood open, thus giving her a good view down the gulch to the south. I was to a side and back of the door, sitting on the rude chair formerly mentioned, with its back tilted against the partition separating another apartment, the sleeping room, from the kitchen and dining room which we were occupying. My position prevented me from seeing what was going on outside. Miss Bristow had been so absorbed in her attention to my narrative of my dream that it was rather by accident that she happened to look down the gulch.

"What is it, Miss Bristow?" I asked noticing the sudden paleness of her face.

She came over to me in an apparently unconcerned way.

"Mr. Name, I want you to slip into that room as quickly as possible and be on guard for any emergency. You can watch through that knot-hole near the door and see what's going on."

"Why, what's the danger, Miss Bristow? What—"

"Hurry get in. You shall see. There's no time to explain now. Later on I will," pushing me in and closing the door at the same time.

I got into the room not a moment too soon. I heard someone coming up on the outside, whistling "Annie Rooney" as though he wanted everyone, and someone in particular to know that he was around, and that what he whistled, and the way he whistled it, had a certain meaning back of it which a certain particular party understood. I had a faint idea of what all this might portend as I took my station behind the partition,

revolver in hand, watching the proceedings through a chink between the boards. Presently I saw a handsome young fellow, of medium build, black, curly hair and a small black moustache, enter the cabin. In his hand he carried a rifle, and two pistols stuck in his holsters; well armed to meet—a woman.

"How d'do, Lucy?" he greeted Miss Bristow as he slightly staggered, with a swagger, into the room.

"I thought you had returned to Dawson," Miss Bristow responded.

"No Ma'am. Couldn't leave without my darling. Too lonesome without you down there. Won't you shake hands with me this morning, Duckie?" He held out his small, well-shaped hand. "No? My, but that's a cool reception for your most affectionate lovey-dovey."

"Jim, why can't you go back and leave me alone. I told you long ago it was all over between us. It will not do you any good to persist in following me."

"Where is your brother this fine morning?"

Knowing she had a staunch protector at hand, the girl was not averse to telling him the truth.

"My brother is out somewhere, but you must not think you can take advantage of me during his absence; besides, he might return and make it very unpleasant for you. You remember the warning he gave you before we left Dawson."

"That much for his warning," snapping his fingers in contempt. "I gave him all the show he wanted. If he'd 'a' been a man, he'd 'a' stuck to Dawson, and not carried you up here out of reach of your lover."

"My brother didn't bring me up here out of fear of you, but rather to avoid trouble. We will not move again on account of you, please remember that. Take my advice and go back to Dawson."

"I'll be the judge of that myself, dearest. I didn't come here this morning for your advice, but for your

answer you promised to give me the other day."

"Well, you may as well know at once that my answer is as it always has been:— No. Had you acted like a man, as I used to know you at first, things would be different between us; but I could never ally myself to a gambler and a desperado such as you. Once more I advise you to leave me alone, and go back to Dawson."

"Are you sure it is, 'No?' People have been persuaded to change their minds before this."

"Mine will never be," she answered determinedly.

Her pistol was lying on the table out of immediate reach.

"Why had she been so negligent as not to secrete it in her dress?" She gave a quick, appealing glance toward it, which he couldn't fail to notice. They stood confronting each other like two pugilists, each watching the other for an opening.

"Lucy, I warn you not to make a move for that pistol," he said making a threatening move toward her, shaking his fist.

"And I warn you not to touch me, if you value your life," she answered, with flashing eyes, her bosom heaving with excitement.

"What'll you do? There's nobody within reach outside of your brother, this side of Dawson."

"My brother will come if I call."

"You better not attempt it, Lucy. Besides, your brother is way up the stream, and out of reach of your voice. Oh, I investigated before I came here," he said as she gave him a questioning, half doubting look.

"I'm going to take you along back to Dawson, and I'll give you just five minutes to get ready. If you'll not go with me peaceably, I'll take you by force. I'll not be balked any longer. You've played the fool with me long enough."

Miss Bristow hardly knew what to do in her ex-

tremity. She feared the consequences if it became necessary for me to show myself. The man was drunk and desperate, and would stop at nothing. She begged and entreated him to leave her and depart in peace. Perhaps he thought she was at his mercy, alone and defenseless; or perhaps, that she was only parleying to gain time. Whatever he thought, he ripped out an oath and made a threatening move toward her.

"Back! back! I say. Don't you dare to put your hand on me," she cried, her whole body trembling with emotion.

At the same instant he heard a slight noise in the other room, which checked him in his mad desire.

"What was that noise?" he asked fiercely, drawing one of his pistols. "Lucy, if you play me one of your tricks, I'll—teach you," he said significantly tapping his revolver.

Miss Bristow moved adroitly, so as to get her old lover between herself and the door, behind which I was concealed. He was taken completely off his guard for an instant. He saw her object in doing so, immediately after. Too late. He was trapped.

"Hands up!" I called in a clear strong voice back of him.

He glanced hurriedly around to meet my eyes, a complete stranger, with a smile on my face, and a revolver in each hand.

"Who the deuce are you?"

"Hands up, I say. No matter who I am," I answered.

This time there was no hesitancy in complying with the command. His hands shot up straight as a stick.

"Miss Bristow, please relieve our guest of his toys before he hurts himself. 'Didn't know it was loaded,' you know," I said addressing the last words to the desperado, significantly.

To be disarmed by a woman, was almost more than the ruffian could stand. However, he gulped down his resentment, with a contemptuous look toward me which spoke more than it was policy for him to express at the time.

"Now, my young gallant," I continued after he was disarmed, "next time you are ordered by your superiors to raise your hands, don't wait for the second bidding. It was only through my indulgence, and for the fact that you are an inexperienced boy that you escaped being killed. I'll warn you that I'll stand for no fooling or treachery on your part."

"Who the deuce are you that you presume to interfere in my private affairs with this young lady?" he hotly asked.

"Who am I? Well, that's a question I can't answer myself; and I dare say I've asked it a thousand and one times. I may call myself a new-comer on the scene, and at present pose as a friend and protector to this young lady, against such cowardly, drunken loafers as you."

"If I had my gun, you wouldn't dare to talk to me like that. Only a coward talks like that to an unarmed foe."

"Yes, for instance, you, when you had Miss Bristow at a disadvantage a moment ago. But we will not argue about cowards or heroes. I am going to give you a bit of advice for your general health. In the first place, Miss Bristow is not going with you; secondly, she desired you to leave her alone. She informed you that she will have nothing furthermore to do with you; and thirdly, she asks you to go away from here and stay away. Well, I'm not going to ask that of you. I'm going to return to you one of your guns, because I don't like to send you away from here without some means of defense; and then I want you to make tracks for Dawson at double quick pace. If I see you lurking

around here five minutes after you leave this cabin, I'll plug you full of holes. Miss Bristow, hand me one of **his guns**. Here it is," I said passing it over. "Now, no treachery, young man. If you practice any of your marksmanship on me, I have friends near here who'll follow you to the ends of the earth. Now be gone."

The fellow slunk away like a coyote, threatening dire vengeance under his breath. In a few minutes he was lost to view.

"Mr. Name, I think you did a very unwise thing in returning his gun."

"Miss Bristow, the man was drunk when he came here, or he might have acted differently. He appears to be pretty well scared and that will help to counteract the whiskey. I don't think you need fear him any more."

"He is a bad man, Mr. Name, and not to be trusted."

"I don't think he'll play any treachery. He's too much of a coward, especially since he knows there's an additional party on the scene."

I always gauged other people by my own honesty, and there is where I made a sad mistake in the present case.

"Let us talk about something else, and take that intended stroll up the gulch."

We walked up the stream, arm in arm. She tried to be gay, yet, with all her efforts she could not entirely rid her mind of the incidents of the morning and the possible future circumstances it might lead to.

"If it wasn't for that man, I think I'd be perfectly happy, Mr. Name. But try as I will, I cannot dispel the cloud that seems to be hanging over me."

"Pardon my curiosity, Miss Bristow, but would you mind telling me who he is?"

"Not in the least, you remember my telling you

sometime ago, I might some day tell you the reason for our moving up here. Well, he was the cause. I know him for the last three years, becoming acquainted with him down at Dawson. As long as he was poor and working hard, he kept sober and industrious, always acting like a perfect gentleman. Our acquaintance soon ripened into friendship, and that into love, followed by an engagement. One day he found himself suddenly rich. The sudden prosperity proved too much for him. From a nice, quiet, modest young fellow he gradually turned to gambling and drinking, squandering everything he had, and turning into a regular bully and tough. Of course, I broke the engagement, whereupon he threatened to shoot me. To avoid trouble we left Dawson and moved up here. He was here the other day, and to stave him off, I promised to give him his answer to-day. The rest you know."

"Didn't you tell your brother about it?"

"No, I was afraid to do so. My brother would shoot him on sight. He promised to do so if he'd ever follow us. You don't know Charlie yet."

"You should tell him as a precaution to yourself. Besides, he has a right to know as your natural protector. What is the fellow's name?"

"His name is Brown,—Jim Brown. I think I will tell my brother to-night," she answered. "I am not at all afraid when someone is with me, but I don't like to stay alone after this."

By this time we had arrived at the spot designated by Miss Bristow in a previous chapter, seating ourselves on the bough of a big tree that had been leveled by some preceding storm. For a while neither had anything to say, each one absorbed in his or her own thoughts, both listening to the musical sound of the water as it gurgled its way through the rocks that obstructed its course. All the different emotions of a lover passed

through me. My mind which was usually so active and resourceful under other circumstances, positively refused to act. Several times I was on the point of addressing her, but the words refused to shape themselves.

"What makes you so quiet, Mr. Name?" she asked me.

Her words startled me. It seemed to me as though I had been suddenly transported back from some far-away place, to my present condition.

"Oh, nothing, I was just thinking," I answered. "By the way, Miss Bristow, you said sometime ago you wished we were all back in the states again."

"Yes, it is too lonely up here, and nothing to be gained after all. And what does it amount to if you do gain what you are after."

"And would you have any consideration—I mean, could you take enough interest in such a rough, ignorant fellow as I am, as to place your trust—"

Here I stopped short as I realized my position. What right had I, such a complete nonentity as I considered myself to be, to try to make an alliance with this pure, whole-souled girl, an alliance that might prove very embarrassing to me later on.

"Why, what's the matter, Mr. Name. Why don't you—finish what you wanted to say?" she said watching me curiously.

"Miss Bristow, perhaps you do not realize as well as I do the"—what else I was going to say I never afterwards remembered myself. At that moment two shots rang out in rapid succession.

"Oh, oh! I'm shot." With those words, the last she ever uttered, she sank down on the ground.

CHAPTER XIII

I WAS rudely jarred out of my melancholy and pessimistic state of mind by the two shots and their dire consequence. I hurriedly looked up in the direction from whence they had come, just in time to see the last remaining dim cloud of smoke before it was dispelled by the breeze. I also thought I detected a patch of bright red, and to my dismay I remembered that Miss Bristow's discarded lover wore a flannel shirt of the same color. I quickly emptied my revolver in the direction I thought I saw this red spot, with what success, I couldn't tell. I next gave my attention to Miss Bristow, vainly examining her for slight signs of life. Once I thought I detected the faintest sign as I pressed my ear over her heart. I ran to the brook for water to bathe her forehead and temples. I called her by name, by all the endearing words I could think of. I realized at last, against my own will, that her lips were sealed forever. This realization brought anguish of the most bitter kind. I cursed the murderer to the lowest depths of perdition; I felt as though I could curse myself for my negligence in arming the murderer before I sent him away. I could not but blame myself as being the prime cause of the crime; and lastly, I cursed my fate.

"My life is becoming more unbearable every day. Everything I do or undertake to do, turns itself into a dagger against my heart; everything but gold;—and even that, no doubt is only accumulating to cause my final ruin."

At this moment I heard someone running down the gulch. It was her brother, who had heard the firing and had come to investigate its cause. He saw what was wrong as he approached.

"What is it?" he sternly asked. "Who did it?"

"Oh, Mr. Bristow, your sister is shot—killed."

"Did you do it?" he asked me in calm, measured words as he fixed his penetrating eyes on me.

"Mr. Bristow, how can you ask me such a question? Your sister was nearer and dearer than my own life to me. Did I do it? Do I look like a murderer?" I asked as the true significance of the words dawned on my mind. "Let me explain certain things to you of which you are ignorant, and then let us act—act quickly. Your sister had a lover down at Dawson whom she discarded, and on account of whom you took her away from there and came up here."

"Yes, how do you know?"

"Never mind how I know. He was here the other day and wanted to renew the engagement; he was here this morning, and it was due to my presence that he didn't kill her in the cabin. He followed us secretly up here, and no doubt is your sister's murderer. Let us take your sister's body down to the cabin and then I will hasten after him."

"That duty belongs to me, her brother. I will avenge her—alone."

"By the right of a brother you have that privilege. By the right of a friendship as close as a brother, I demand the right of accompanying you. Don't be selfish in this case, Mr. Bristow," I declared.

Bristow reached out his hand across the dead body of his sister and grasped that of mine saying, "So be it then. Forgive me, Los. Together, we will follow him to the ends of the earth if necessary. May God have mercy on his soul, when we catch him."

"Amen," I answered solemnly.

Brother and lover, we carried the body of the dead girl in silence to the cabin.

"We will bury her when we come back," Bristow said, as we entered the cabin with her, tears running

down his cheeks, his body trembling under the excitement.

I was calm and collected, with a determination on my face that boded ill for someone. One after the other I examined and loaded my weapons.

"I am ready," I said in a low voice. "Let us go back to the spot from where the crime was committed."

We proceeded in silence to the place.

"Here, I think, is the place where he fired the shots from," I declared, after I had taken my bearings. "Now look sharp, Bristow,—see if we can discover any traces of him. Ah, here is a little twig, shot off by one of the bullets,—and here are several leaves punctured. Now to discover his tracks."

Both of us had a fair knowledge of wood-craft, and the ground where we were, being soft and free from stones, we had no trouble in discovering his foot-prints. The tracks showed the murderer to have taken long strides, as though running, and at first ran at right angles to the direction of the gulch, afterwards describing a half circle and running parallel to the side of the mountain in a southwesterly direction.

"Where do you think he'll make for?" I asked.

"To Dawson, without a doubt," Bristow answered. "And in my opinion he'll follow the water-course. We'll have to be strictly on our guard, Los. He is a dangerous man. How many weapons has he?"

"One, only one," I answered. "He has the advantage over us in one respect. We have to come out in the open, and he won't."

"I don't think that counts much in his favor. But where I think the advantage comes to him, is in the time we lose in finding the trail."

"That's the main difficulty against us," I answered, "and right here is where we lose him," I continued, coming to a place covered with stones as far as we

could see. "He'll take advantage of this, and may change his course."

"That's so. Let's walk around it until we discover it again."

We lost several hours, vainly seeking for traces of the lost trail. We finally gave up in disappointment, returning to the stream and following its course.

"He'll not take any rest tonight," Bristow remarked that evening as it became dusk.

"Neither will we. We've lost too much time already. Tomorrow morning we may discover the trail again. I'm sorry we lost all that time running around amongst those rocks," I answered.

All that night we continued after the fugitive, now running, now walking, until it seemed as though our strength could not hold out much longer. Bristow had hurriedly prepared a little lunch before we had started in pursuit, which we now sat down to eat, as the dawn appeared over the mountains. After a hurried breakfast we resumed our man-hunt, like two blood hounds. All day we kept it up. Suddenly, toward evening, I stopped short and proceeded to examine the ground. Bristow, who was slightly ahead of me turned round on me, calling me.

"Did you find it?" he asked eagerly.

"Looks like it, don't it?" I answered as I pointed to the faint foot-print on the ground.

"Thank God for it," Bristow exclaimed, tears filling his eyes.

"Our chances for capturing him are brighter again," said I.

"Our chances! Chance does not cut any figure,—at least it shall not in this case. His fate is sealed as sure as we two are standing under these tall pines. It is only a matter of time. I shall track him to the farthest corner of the earth. I will kill him should I

find him before the altar of the church," Bristow replied vehemently.

All that day we kept hot on the trail, losing and finding it alternately, never lagging a step, keeping up our strength and courage by will-power. Until after midnight we kept on. We were both very tired and Bristow advised taking rest. We laid down under a huge tree, he to snatch a few hours sleep if possible, I to summon my occult power to our assistance in running down and overtaking the murderer.

For a long time, as it seemed to me, my agitated mind inhibited me from placing myself into that negative condition whereby I derived the power of receiving those mystic revelations. Not without a great effort did I finally succeed in excluding all conscious thought from my Objective Mind.

The vision came; one of the most realistic I had had up to that time. Yet it was not what I had hoped for and expected. What I saw was again the truth, verified to me several years later.

My soul was again transported into that far distant, beautiful, verdant valley surrounded by those dark blue mountains. I saw a large barn and farmhouse standing alone and solitary in a large grassy field, in from the main highway, connected to it by a narrow lane. I saw the inside of the barn, the cattle and horses in their stalls, some lying down in peaceful rest. From there I was transported to the hay mows over their heads. Presently I saw a spark of fire on one of the mows. At first it was no bigger than the first flare of a match after striking. It grew as large as a man's hand, rapidly spreading out in all directions, consuming and feeding upon the newly-made hay. It grew very angry, appearing to feed upon itself as it licked the rafters and shingles of the roof. It soon had eaten itself through. The access of the air gave fresh impetus to its fury. Presently, almost in a twinkling, I saw men and boys

come running from all directions. Clairaudiently, I heard their shouts. The whole upper story of the barn was by this time a living, licking mass of flames, sending their sparks and cinders high toward heaven. The whole surrounding sky was lit up, reminding me of the Aurora Borealis which I had seen so often in this far northern country.

I saw them taking the horses and cattle out, some of which were timid and afraid, refusing to budge, and which had to be carried out bodily, almost. Others were wild and frenzied vainly tugging at their chains in their efforts to escape the inferno. Some of them I saw buried alive under the debris of burning joists and hay as it fell upon them.

The fire had burned its fury. I was taken to a room in the house. In that room I saw a man all by himself, lonesome and dejected, seated in a huge rocking chair, his face buried in his hands. Presently he looked up. I recognized his features. They were those of the man I had seen in a previous vision, where he had assaulted that sad-faced woman and where in her struggles with him she was thrown against the stove. The expression on his face had changed greatly. On it I saw unmistakable lines of sorrow and repentance. His eyes became riveted on the wall of the room as though held by fascination. And as I followed his gaze, I saw written upon that wall in huge capital letters the word: **RETRIBUTION.**

I saw the man get out of his chair, a desperate expression on his face. I followed him ascending the attic stairway. I saw him walk to the further end and take down a thin, strong rope which was hanging on a spike, driven into one of the rafters. He next tied the rope to one of the rafters and at the other end he made a slip noose. This he slipped over his head and then kicked away the box on which he had been standing. I saw him struggle violently and make vain efforts to undo

the knot which grew tighter and tighter as he struggled.

Bristow's voice called me back to consciousness. The dawn was breaking over the mountains. Again we discovered the trail, which became more distinct as we proceeded. We exercised more caution now, not knowing when we might come upon the quarry. We followed the trail probably two miles or more, when happening to look slightly to the right of me, I almost gave vent to a loud exclamation of surprise, at the same time clutching Bristow by the arm to draw his attention to what I saw.

Bristow's rifle went up in a second.

"For God's sake, don't shoot," I whispered, grabbing hold of his barrel. "That would be too easy a death for him. Let him know who his executioners are. It will give him comfort on the other side."

"You are right Los. It would be too easy for him."

Not more than a hundred feet away lay Brown, stretched out full length, sound asleep, unconscious of the doom awaiting. His body was partly concealed by the underbrush, his red shirt alone showing conspicuously through it. Fatigue alone must have induced him to sleep so soundly and so long. Not more than ten feet away from where he lay were to be seen the charred sticks of a fire which he had no doubt kindled the night before.

A plan of action was immediately decided upon by Bristow and myself.

To the left of us lay the trunk of a huge tree that had been torn up by its roots.

"Bristow, I have a plan," I said as the fallen monarch reminded me of the one further above, where Miss Bristow and I had been sitting when she was so cruelly shot.

It was a fatal coincidence, that a fallen tree was to play such an important part in each case—the taking of a human life.

"You get behind the trunk of that tree, whilst I will make a detour opposite to you, so as to get him between us. When I give you the signal, you fire into the air and arouse him from his peaceful slumbers. I'll be near enough to him to make sure of my aim. He will be attracted by the smoke of your rifle. Keep down behind the tree, out of danger of his gun. I'll call upon him to surrender. Should he show any signs of stubbornness, I'll wing him in his gun arm. We want to take him alive by all means. Should my plans by any chance miscarry, show him no mercy. You understand?"

"Yes, go ahead, before he wakes up."

It took me but a moment to tip-toe to my station, in the meantime Bristow taking his place behind the fallen tree. When we were both ready, I gave a vigorous nod of the head as a signal for Bristow to shoot.

Bang! Like a hounded deer, surprised out of his lair, with one leap Brown jumped to his feet, at the same time jumping aside and drawing his gun. He cast a frightened, hurried glance around, as he immediately saw the smoke of Bristow's rifle curling above the fallen tree. Holding his gun in readiness, he advanced, at the same time calling on the person who fired the shot, to surrender or take the consequence. But another surprise was in store for him. Sharp and clear came the word back of him:

"Surrender!"

Turning around sharply, like some animal brought to bay, he found himself staring into my rifle.

"Surrender!—and be quick about it," again came the sharp command from me.

"You go to He—"

Crash! went the bullet through his right shoulder, the arm falling limply to his side, the gun to the ground.

"I told you once before not to hesitate when your su-

perior commanded you to surrender. You know the result now, don't you?" I said as I walked up to him.

"Cowards! both of you," Brown hissed between his teeth. "I always thought you were a gentleman," he continued, addressing Bristow.

"We will not discuss that question now. We followed you to pass judgment on a more important question," Bristow answered.

"I didn't do it, Charlie. As God is my judge, I didn't."

"What didn't you do?" I asked him.

"Why, Charlie's sister. I mean I didn't shoot her. God knows I didn't. I wasn't near—"

"Why, you degenerate, who told you she was shot?"

"D-d-didn't y-you j-j-just a-a-c-cuse m-m-me o-of it?"

Brown stammered, realizing how he was caught in his own trap

"We did nothing of the kind, but since you plead guilty we will proceed with the sentence and execution. You will have ten minutes time to prepare for the hereafter, after which you will be your own executioner, with your own gun—the gun you shot Miss Bristow with," I replied.

Brown fairly collapsed, vainly looking around for some means of escape, as I solemnly but sternly pronounced his doom.

After committing the crime, while still a fugitive, he began to realize the enormity of his offense as his brain cleared from the effects of the whisky; and now, as he looked into the determined faces of her avengers, he realized it still more fully. He pleaded his drunken state he was in, as an extenuation of his crime. He cursed, us his two enemies, and his fate, alternately; then again he begged for mercy.

"Mercy! You ask for mercy? Would you have shown mercy to that poor, defenseless girl, when you

thought her alone in her cabin the other morning, and finally, after I gave you back one of your guns as a means of defense on your way back to Dawson, you betrayed that confidence and charity on my part, and followed us up the gulch and shot her in cold blood; did you think of mercy then? You want to blame whisky for your crime now, since you are caught. Brown, did you ever hear of a man to say, that whisky induced him to commit a good deed? No, whenever a man commits a crime, he lays the blame on whisky. Do you think whisky is intelligent enough to distinguish between right and wrong, and that it will always impel a man to do wrong without once in a while impelling him to do good? No, whisky stimulates the mind to better reasoning powers, or else puts him out of business altogether.

"Your excuse won't go with us, you coward. You miserable drunken sot! You murderer! I have half a mind to carve your miserable heart out to see what it looks like."

I had by this time worked myself into such a fury, that it was all I could do to restrain myself from beating the murderer's face to a jelly, defenseless though he was.

"You have yet two minutes time, Brown. If you have any prayers to say, say them, and be quick about it."

The prisoner was a pitiable object as he stood there between his two judges and executioners. Large beads of perspiration gathered on his forehead; his face appeared as though it was cut out of marble. His knees, refusing to bear him any longer, he sank down on the ground, his head bowed down between his knees, his heart over-flowing with remorse. I grabbed him by his wounded shoulder and sternly ordered him on his feet, which he did howling with pain.

"Give me his gun, Charlie.— With this gun you murdered the girl and with it you'll send yourself to eternity. Don't think we're fools Brown," I said, noticing a gleam of hope in the prisoner's eyes. "You'll only pull the trigger. I'll hold the gun."

"Have you anything more to say, Brown?" Bristow asked him.

The prisoner shook his head, meaning thereby that he had not.

"Now then, be as brave as you were when you shot the girl," I said as I held the barrel of the revolver directly over Brown's heart.

"Now Brown, whenever you are ready, push the trigger, and don't be too long about it or we might urge you."

Slowly, Brown's arm reached out, his thumb finally on the trigger. A muffled sound, like a peal of distant thunder, and Brown sank to the ground. A few spasms, and all was over.

"Now we are ready to return," Bristow remarked quietly.

"Not yet," I answered. "We have to bury him."

"Let the wolves take care of that," Bristow suggested.

"Charlie, we are no savages, although we took savage vengeance. We owe it to decency to cover his body in some way. I am not suggesting it out of any compunctious feelings."

"Well, I guess you are right, Los. Let's cover him with stones."

It took us but a few moments to cover Brown's body with a pile of stones, after which we started on our homeward march.

"We still have one sad duty to perform after we return: The burial of your sister," I remarked. "I wish I could undo one act in this sad affair."

"What is that, Los?" Charlie asked.

"The handing over to him that gun of his. Things might be altogether different then. But I suppose what is, was to be. Sometimes, Charlie, I almost believe in predestination."

"I don't," Charlie answered firmly. "I don't believe the Lord wanted him to kill my poor sister. If that should be the case, then we are murderers. No Los, it was his own degenerate soul that impelled him to do it;—and jealousy."

"And who gave him his degenerate soul?" I asked.

"Whisky;—gold;—the gaming table. Oh, I saw him gradually go down, down, down—until the maelstrom sucked him in."

"We think, those were the causes. Perhaps they were. I don't know," I answered, as though talking to myself. "But if I had to do it again, I'd have detained him until your return to the cabin, and then we would have decided what to do with him."

"I sincerely wish you had; then I would have killed him in a square fight. He knew what to expect from me. I warned him before we left Dawson. But don't worry about that which you couldn't prevent."

On our return journey, I told Bristow many things concerning that Sunday morning, of which Bristow had still been ignorant. It took us the greater part of three days to complete the journey back. We were completely worn out. The soles on our shoes were gone, our feet weary and sore. When we arrived at the door of Bristow's cabin, we found the lock broken. Bristow was the first to notice it.

"Was anyone with Brown when he was here?"

"Not that I know of," I answered.

"Perhaps Brown was innocent after all," Bristow answered, as he compressed his lips, with a startled expression on his face. "You know, he protested his innocence to the last."

"No, he was the guilty one; we got the right party," I replied. "I can swear I saw the red shirt disappear in the bushes."

We opened the door and cautiously looked around as we entered. Everything was as we had left it, even her revolver was still lying on the table, where she had laid it herself. I walked silently up to the corpse and scrutinized it with tender emotions, tears, the first ones since the tragedy, rolling down my cheeks. I sat down beside the body and gave vent to uncontrollable grief, bewailing my fate, and the innocent part I played in the drama. Bristow's grief was of a different nature. His was such that he would nourish a whole lifetime. The fountains of his heart were dry. He had a stern, stoic expression on his face as he stood there viewing the body of his dead sister for the last time. He came up to me and gently tapped me on the shoulder.

"Come Los, can we bury her yet to-night?"

"Yes, we can," I answered, as I gently stroked back a few stray locks of her golden hair.

Bristow produced a pick and shovel, and together we worked silently until we had excavated a hole sufficiently deep to receive her body. When all was ready, we wrapped her body in a white sheet, which served both as a shroud and coffin, and lowered her into the grave.

"Can you offer a prayer, Los?" Bristow asked of me.

"I'm a poor hand at praying, Bristow; the only prayer I remember anything about, is: 'Now I lay me down;' if you think that is appropriate," I answered, questioningly, doubtful myself as to the prayer in question being suitable for the occasion.

Bristow wasn't so sure about it himself, but urged me to recite it, which I did. Afterward we silently shoveled back the earth, each one offering his own benediction.

CHAPTER XIV

BRISTOW and I passed into his cabin. Everything appeared changed—sad and lonesome. I am unable to describe the desolate feeling that came stealing over me. However it was no time to give in to our grief. Bristow was seated on a chair, staring vacantly out through the open door. It now remained for me to console him.

"Bristow," I said, "what do you intend to do?"

"God knows. I am unable to decide."

"Go with me," I said. "We have still room for one more in our cabin. I am sure, after I have explained the circumstances to my friends you will receive an open-hearted welcome. You can leave your things here for a few days after which we will come for them. He took my hand and pressed it fervently in silent recognition of the friendly offer. He secured the door and we set out together for my home.

It was late that same night, the fifth day after I had left to pay my last respects to Miss Bristow, when I knocked at the door of our cabin.

"Who is out?" I heard the stern voice of Uncle in answer to my knock.

"I, Los," I answered, clearly and distinctly.

I heard him stride up to the door in his heavy boots, unlock and unbar the door. He opened it with a sudden jerk with one hand, with the other he held his revolver pointed toward me.

"Come in," he commanded sternly.

I entered, followed by Bristow, who had been standing in the dark, to a side, unseen by Uncle. His entrance behind me occasioned not a little surprise. I

looked around and noticed the coolness of my friends, the Kid being the only one extending me any kind of a welcome.

"Looks rather frigid for this time of the year," I remarked casually. "What is wrong Uncle, has the claim suddenly petered out, or has my prolonged absence created such a bad impression and such sour expressions on your faces? Allow me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Bristow, whom I have urged to accept of our hospitality in view of the sudden bereavement that has fallen upon both him and me."

They showed a cool reserve to my friend. I continued:

"However, if we are considered as interlopers, and unwelcome, we will leave. I should very much desire though, to take along my share of the gold."

Uncle now thought it time to declare himself, and at the same time to ask an explanation of me.

"Ahem," he made, clearing his throat. "Los, you've been absent now close to a week. The third day after you had gone, and not seeing nor hearing anything of you, I decided to do a little prospecting and find out what was wrong. The first place I started out for was the home of that young girl you'd been raving so much about. Well, I found the girl all right, but I didn't find you, nor her brother, and under the circumstances, I had my suspicions aroused. Now, what I'd like to know is:—Where were you and her brother when that gun was fired?—if you can explain."

I now understood their coolness toward me and my friend; we were both accused of murder. Uncle had preferred the charge in a very undiplomatic way. I was very sensitive where my honor was concerned, and a hot flush of anger mounted to my cheeks as I heard this question addressed to me.

"So, you were the one who broke the lock on Bris-

tow's door. I never thought you could be guilty of a deed like that. Mr. Bristow put that lock on to safeguard his property and to protect his dead sister's body from profanation."

"You mean to hide it, don't you?"

"Yes, but not out of fear. Mr. Bristow and I both understand you, Uncle, and I am sorry that you had such little confidence in me as to charge me with the murder of that girl, who was nearer and dearer to me than my own life. I will trouble you boys for my share of the gold, and then Bristow and I will leave for his own cabin."

"Not so fast, young fellow. We want to have an explanation of that young lady's death before you leave this cabin," said Uncle as his hand dropped down on his gun.

"Well, you can go to perdition before I'll tell you, and I defy you to stop me from leaving. What right have you to appoint yourself judge and jury over this affair, I'd like to know?" I replied hotly at the same time making a threatening move.

Uncle, however, was too quick for me. I found myself looking into the barrel of his gun.

"Los, I warn you to keep your hand off your gun. I have a little experience in that line myself."

At this point, the Kid, fearing for the safety of either one of us, jumped in between us.

"Uncle! Los! you are both at fault. Put down your guns and talk this matter over amicably. Uncle you shouldn't have talked the way you did;—and Los, if you'd have kept down your temper a little everything would be settled by this time and we'd all be smoking the pipe of peace"

"My intention was to explain, but I wasn't given a chance. I was simply declared guilty, right or wrong," I declared, secretly pleased at the Kid's timely interfer-

ence.

Mr. Bristow, who had thus far refrained from saying anything now came forward and offered to resolve the doubt they were laboring under.

"Gents, if you will permit me, a stranger, I'll try and give you an explanation of the whole, sad affair. In the first place the murdered girl was my sister. In the second, she was neither killed by Los nor by me, but by an old enemy of ours who followed us from Dawson on purpose for revenge. Los' long absence was due to our following the murderer, whom we overtook and settled accounts with. After that we returned and buried my sister. My being here is entirely due to Los' kind invitation. If I am in the way here, I shall go back where I come from."

The Kid looked significantly at Uncle at this sudden vindication of my innocence. Uncle appeared ashamed and confused, not being able to utter a word for several moments. At last he found voice:

"Los, I've done you a great injustice, both before and behind your back, and I ask your pardon in full. The Kid was the only one who felt certain of your innocence, and if I had listened to him this would never have happened."

My generous nature impelled me to accept Uncle's apology. My right hand shot out spontaneously, grasping that of Uncle's and giving it a hearty shake.

"Let us forget all about the incident, Uncle, and be friends as before."

Bust and the Kid also came up and shook hands.

"Kid, you're all right, I'll never forget you," I said as I held the boy's hand.

"And now pards," I continued, "I've brought my friend along to share our hospitality. I thought probably you'd have no objections to him working with us on shares."

Each of the three was willing to agree to the proposition, and Bristow was welcomed as one of us. That night Bristow and I had to go over every detail of the crime, how we tracked the murderer and finally executed him, after which Uncle gave a lucid description of his hunt for me, his finding of the girl's body and the suspicions and the wrong conclusions he was finally led to.

"Boys, what is your idea of Los being gone for so long," I asked Bust and the Kid here the third day after you had left the cabin. The whole affair appears mighty strange to me. Somehow or other he is in hot water again."

"I've been in fear for Los for several days, Uncle, and I think it is about time for some of us to investigate," spoke the Kid.

"Unless he is making love to that girl he has gone lunny over, ever since the snow storm. He is so far gone on her, I have heard him talk about her in his dreams."

"Thus we talked about you in your absence Los. I admit it wasn't very nice of us to do so.

"The fourth day came and found you still missing. I started out early, not in the best of humor, thinking it a waste of time to be trudging after you. I decided to pay those neighbors a visit first of all, expecting to find you there, making love to the girl, oblivious of the fact that we were puzzled and worried over your prolonged absence.

"From the description you had given us, I had a good idea of where Mr. Bristow's cabin was located and had no difficulty in finding it. Everything was quiet as I approached it. Several times I stopped and listened, not a sound greeted my ear. I noticed the shutters all closed and on coming up to the door I found that locked, whereupon I became suspicious. I gave a number of

heavy raps on the door, I hallooed, and finally turned my attention to the shutters. They refused to yield. I next walked up the gulch, thinking I might meet someone. All in vain. I returned to the cabin, determined to know even if I had to break down the door.

"It's mighty strange anyway. Los would never act this way without good reason. I am sure this is the place. If you aren't a fac-simile of the Flying Dutchman, I'd like to know what else you are.' Thus I kept on talking to myself, meanwhile pounding on the door. 'If you don't open the door in five minutes I'll burst it,' I yelled.

"I found a suitable rock which I picked up and proceeded to batter the lock with, breaking it into pieces. Opening the door part way I cautiously intruded my head, doubtful of the reception that might be awaiting me. After satisfying myself as to my safety, I opened it wide and entered. The first thing I noticed was that little revolver lying on the table.

"I picked it up and examined it. 'Pretty little toy,' I mused.

"I looked about and saw the girl lying peacefully on the bunk.

"'Ah!' I laid down the revolver and backed toward the door, watching her silently for several minutes.

"'Is that the beauty?—Queer that she didn't hear my racket.' I softly tiptoed over to where she lay, watching her as a cat watches a mouse. I was ready at the least sign of life to beat a hasty retreat. I was impressed as I had never been by any woman I had ever seen. You had not overdrawn your description of her. Even I, with my hard, storm-weathered nature, could have fallen in love with such a creature, I thought as I looked down upon those gentle, immobile features.

"I noticed no signs of life, I became suspicious. Slowly, I reached out my hand and with the tip of my

finger I barely touched her forehead. It felt icy. I drew back in alarm. I ran to one of the shutters and hastily unbarred it, pushing it wide open. A flood of light streamed in upon her face.

"I now made a more thorough examination, different ideas assuming shape in my mind.

" 'Where is Los?' I thought. 'Where is her brother Los had been telling about?'

"Opening her dress, I found the tiny hole the bullet had made as it plowed its way through her body.

" 'My God, shot through the heart,' I said aloud.

"I hurriedly rearranged her dress, closed the shutter and left the place, merely closing the door, the lock being broken. I knew not what to think of it. Strange and startling ideas filled my mind. I was worried about you, Los. Your conduct during the last three or four weeks had been decidedly queer, and yet you had positively declared, on being pressed, that there was nothing going wrong between you and the girl. The more I reasoned, the more I tried to balance circumstances with facts; your figure invariably stood in the back ground, and each time the cloud overhanging you appeared larger.

" 'I do hope Los will return and will be able to explain. I do hope he will.'

"Bust and the Kid were impatiently awaiting my return, and plied me with questions, to all of which I turned a deaf ear, stating that I wanted a little more time to think. I told them however, that I had not seen anything of you and that, that had to suffice until after supper, when I would tell them all I had discovered and also my suspicions. After supper was over and the dishes cleared away, we all filled our pipes, and Bust and the Kid assumed an attentive attitude.

" 'Now boys, I'm ready to tell you what I've seen today. Perhaps after hearing my story, you may be

able to make head or tail out of it. I can't. But say maybe that girl wasn't a beauty! I retract every word I said about Los falling in love with her. She certainly must have been a beaut.'

"'Must have been? Why what do you mean, Uncle,' the Kid asked me.

"'Now, just hold your tongue, Kid. You'll get everything in good time—in good time.'

"Then I related to them the whole story just as I have told it to you.

"'Now boys, the whole case seems mighty suspicious to me. Who fired that shot? That's the important question I'd like to have answered me.'

"'You don't suspect Los, do you?' Bust asked.

"'I don't suspect anyone in particular as yet. But I do hope Los can give an account of himself, that is—if he ever returns. I tell you boys, it appears mighty queer to me, for a man to forget all about himself—who he is and where he comes from. Mighty queer,—mighty queer.'

"'Uncle you and Bust may both believe him guilty. I won't,' said the Kid decidedly."

He and I had always been the staunchest of friends, and he, for one, was not going to turn against me on such flimsy, circumstantial evidence. Proof, indubitable proof, had to be furnished before he would turn against me. He fully believed I would be able to give a good account of all my actions during my absence. The fact that the girl was murdered during my absence proved nothing, he told Uncle.

"'Well but she had a brother who was working a claim that was paying fairly well. What became of him? You don't suppose he killed her, do you? Who knows what became of their gold?'

"'Now Uncle, you are jumping to conclusions. What gold did they have, I'd like to know. Los told me him-

self their claim wasn't paying. You don't suppose he murdered her brother, too, do you?"

"See here Kid," I said. "I am not accusing anyone, and I want you to understand that. But there are certain things about that man I'd like to have explained. Why was he sulking around here for the last three or four weeks? Can you tell me? Why it was the girl and nothing else."

"Now Uncle, calm yourself, calm yourself. I'm not going to take Los' part, nor go against him, but he's been too good a man to down merely on suspicion,' interposed Bust here.

"I'm just looking things squarely in the face. Gold has been the undoing of many a man; and better men than Los, or either of you or I. Perhaps his love for the girl was only a sham to get their gold."

"This was too much for the Kid.

"Uncle, he said sharply, jumping up, his eyes flashing defiance, the first thing you did on your return to-day, was to take back what you said about Los going lunny over 'that petticoat,' as you used to call her. You have had a lot of experience in your time, and ought to be able to judge human nature somewhat. I am only a boy—a Kid, as you call me, ignorant, stupid and unsophisticated; but let me advise you to be careful, and to weigh your words well, that you may not have to go down on your knees before Los and swallow what you have vomited. Give the man a chance to defend himself. I feel sure of his ability to clear himself. As for stealing their gold, his own share here squashes that theory."

"Your sermon, Kid, is all right for a young man who hasn't seen the ways of the world yet. As for apologizing for what I've said—I don't think I'll have to. Appearances are about ninety-nine chances out of a hundred against him. He certainly knows the girl is

dead, and he also knows we'd go looking for him; now why in the nation doesn't he show up and explain? I'd like to know.'

"'No doubt he had his reasons, Uncle,' replied the Kid, bound to have the last word, favorable to you.

"'Well, whoever stays in the cabin tomorrow—I want to see him, should he return. He'll no doubt return for his dust. I guess the duty will fall on you, Kid. It isn't safe for all of us to leave the cabin until this case is cleared up. Bust, what's your opinion—guilty or not guilty?' I asked.

"'I haven't formed any opinion yet. I admit circumstances point against the man; however we should give him a chance to explain before we condemn him.'

"This settled the argument regarding the crime and your connection with it, and as it was getting late we all tumbled into our bunks to get what sleep we could under the circumstances.

"The following few days little was said about the crime, your name seldom being mentioned. I cautioned the Kid to be on his guard and not let himself be caught napping, and under no circumstances, should you make your appearance to leave you depart without my seeing you."

"I admit, Uncle, suspicions pointed against me in view of what you tell me, and I do not blame you much for the stand you took," I answered.

CHAPTER XV

ONCE more, and as it turned out for me, for the last time, winter and the cold long nights had set in. Day after day, the five of us went down into the mountain, laboring hard in digging out the earth and bringing it to the top for the following spring's panning. Bristow and I especially worked hard, and with a dogged determination, more so to divert our minds from our recent sorrow than for any pecuniary gain. Our mutual sorrow increased our attachment for each other, seldom finding us apart. Bristow was of a quiet disposition, and devoted most of his time during the evenings to reading, especially those books his sister had been fond of, and which he now prized above everything else. Especially did he enjoy reading certain verses which she had marked as appealing to her thoughts and sentiments.

I was to a certain extent a fatalist and a mystic, and took things in a philosophical way; not that I moved around, whistling gay tunes or with a perpetual smile on my face. Whilst my sorrow for the girl was just as deep as Bristow's, yet I derived consolation in the belief that things were destined to be as they were, and that everything would be eventually for the best.

"I can't understand your logic," Bristow said to me one day, while at work. "You mean to say that it was God's will that Brown was to murder my sister in cold blood, and that afterward we should follow him and take his life, and that he condoned all? No, Los, I can't take any stock in such reasoning."

"No, I don't mean to say that He condoned Brown's crime, nor that He condoned ours. What I mean to say is, that God's way of reasoning is not ours, and that our minds are too limited to grasp His plans. Small

beginnings have often times great endings, and in after years probably we shall have everything deciphered to us, causing us to look at it in a different light. Who knows what suffering may have been spared your sister by her untimely end, although I would give the whole world, if I possessed it, to have her back in our midst again. No one deplores her death, nor grieves more for her than I do. Your sister was a very good girl, one that you meet amongst a thousand, and perhaps she is now looking down from above, watching over us and leading us safely toward our destiny. You should not be continually thinking what might have been if this or that had been done so, or had been left undone thus. Try and look things squarely in the face as they are, and what effect they may have on the future. What is past, is past, and cannot be retrieved or altered, and in a very short time our life's course will be run, and everything will be the same."

"Perhaps Los, you are right in a good many of your reasonings; yet, I cannot forget the fact that my dear sister lies buried, dead and cold under the ground."

"Neither can I, nor do I wish to forget her, and the memory of your dead sister will always bring to my mind fond recollections of the happy times we spent together. Many a night have I lain awake, wishing she might still be with us, yet at the same time believing everything was for the best."

While we were thus talking, we kept diligently at work in the drift, which was the main one, while Bust and the Kid were working in one of those ramifications, previously mentioned. Uncle, who felt slightly indisposed that morning, stayed in the cabin, offering to act as cook. I was picking away at the earth, which was gradually becoming less compact, while Bristow stood about six or seven feet back of me to allow me more scope for my pick.

"Listen Bristow,—don't that sound hollow?" I asked as I struck in the pick with all my might, at the same time throwing all my weight against it.

Bristow jumped back, giving a warning shout to me as he did so. Too late! The whole wall in front of me, together with that under my feet, suddenly gave way, engulfing me and carrying me along with it. We had struck a subterranean cavity. Bristow told me he heard the dull rumbling of the earth, and as it appeared to him, the splash of water far down below. Bust and the Kid, having heard the commotion, came running out of their drift, inquiring what was wrong. Bristow, who was scared almost out of his senses, could only point to the dark hole yawning in front of them.

"Where's Los?" Inquired the Kid. "Did he go down?"

"Yes," answered Bristow.

"I'll tell Uncle," the Kid shouted back as he ran for the opening.

It took the Kid but a moment to reach the cabin, the door of which he threw open so suddenly and with such force that he upset Uncle, who stood right back of it, all in a heap on the floor.

"Confound you, what ails you? coming in here like a roaring hurricane, all out of wind."

"The whole mine's caved in, Uncle, and Los' gone with it. I guess he's killed. Hurry up before it's too late."

"What's the matter, Kid? Explain yourself. In one breath you say, Los is killed, and in the next you say, hurry up before it's too late."

"Don't ask any questions, Uncle, but come, Don't stand there like a fool. You'll see when you get there," the Kid answered excitedly, rushing out of the cabin toward the mine, Uncle chasing after him.

"What's up," Uncle asked as he entered the drift

and saw the yawning chasm before him.

"We had a cave-in and Los caved in with it," Bristow replied, following with a brief description of the accident.

Uncle picked up a small stone and dropped it down. A few seconds after, he heard the faint splash of water.

"That sounds as though it was way down in hades, Kid. You run down to the cabin and get the two longest ropes we've got. Bust, you go with him," Uncle commanded.

In a few minutes the boys were back with the ropes.

"Who'll go down?" Uncle asked.

"I will," answered the Kid, taking hold of one end of the rope and tying it around him. "Boys, I must have a lantern, I won't be able to see a thing down there."

Before he had finished speaking, Bust had started off for one.

"Here you are Kid," coming back and handing him the lantern—one of those old fashioned, square things, with a tallow-candle inside.

"Now be careful, Kid, and don't bump your head against the rocks," cautioned Uncle as they slowly lowered him.

It was a novel experience for the Kid, to be lowered into this unknown region, his life hanging merely by the threads of a rope. Visions of the bottomless pit, pictures of which he had seen in "Dante's Inferno," danced through his mind. He felt the chills creeping up and down his back, and his wrought up mind was almost ready to conjure up all kinds of hob goblins as he looked around at the dripping walls. He swung the lantern to and fro, cautiously peering into the darkness surrounding him, dreading every moment he'd discover something too hideous for him to think of. They had lowered him probably sixty feet or so, when, as he

swung his lantern around, he noticed an indistinct, huddled up mass back of him, lying on a ledge of rock that projected out about four or five feet. At the same time he heard a faint groan, which appeared to him as though it was coming out of the rocks. He gave a loud shriek, the echoes of which coming up from below, appeared to him as though the earth was full of fiends, mocking him in his distress. These echoes intensified his excited condition, he told me afterward.

"Pull me up! Pull me up!" he shouted.

"What's the matter with you down there?" Uncle shouted, partly guessing the cause of his excited yells.

"I saw and heard something. Why don't you pull me up?" he shouted back from below.

"You saw and heard something? Where did you see and hear it?"

"Back of me, lying on a rock," the Kid answered back, somewhat less excited as it slowly dawned on his excited mind that he was searching for me.

"Well, why don't you examine it? Don't act like an idiot; it may be Los," Uncle yelled down.

The Kid's nerves gradually assumed their normal condition as he kept looking at the queer object that had caused his alarm. At first he couldn't make out what it was, but as his eyes gradually became accustomed to the darkness, it resolved itself into the shape of a human being. He was still slightly below me. He called up for more rope, and as he came opposite it, he could faintly distinguish my face and hands. He immediately called out to those above to stop lowering. The light of the lantern was not strong enough to penetrate the darkness sufficient for him to distinguish the features, although he knew it was I. His body swung about eight feet distant from the ledge of rock, and he concluded he could not possibly swing himself over on it, so he gave orders for the rest to pull him up quickly.

He soon told them of his discovery and the position of my body.

"We'll have to devise some plan to get next to him,"

Uncle remarked, after the Kid had finished.

"How would it be to take a stick or rod along, sufficiently long to reach from one side to the other? The rope would hold me suspended and all I'd have to do, would be to push across with the rod by propping it against the wall."

"Your plan's O. K. Kid. Bust run out and see if you can find a sapling that will answer the purpose."

While Bust was gone for the sapling, the Kid gave instructions to the other two as to what they were to do after they had left him down, being not a little elated over the fact that he was giving orders to Uncle, instead of receiving them from him, as was the usual case.

"I'll fasten the rope around Los' body, keeping enough end to hold him from swinging against the other side. When I say pull, you pull steady and draw him up, after which you can let the rope down for me. You can tie a stone to it so as to give it more swing. When I tell you to stop, you stop, and swing it over toward me, and I'll catch it. When I yell for to pull, you just tighten the rope, and then you wait until I say, ready. I don't want you to pull me against that wall. Understand?"

"Bravo, Kid! Yes we understand; you got some brains after all," said Uncle, who could not refrain from having a fling at the Kid once in a while.

In a few moments the Kid was lowered down again, carrying the long stick with him. In a few moments he was standing on the ledge by the side of me, around whose body he immediately fastened the rope. Gradually my limp body swung over the ledge as the ones from above drew on the rope. Up, up went my body until it disappeared from the Kid's view altogether. The

Kid, who had paid very little attention to his surroundings now proceeded to make an examination of the rocks, by the aid of his lantern, more out of curiosity and to pass away the time, than in the hope of discovering anything valuable. As he held the lantern above his head waving it to and fro to get a better view, he gave a cry of delight at the sight he beheld. The whole rock in front and above him was shooting out little rays of yellow light, as though in imitation of the ones produced by his lantern.

"Whew!"—he whistled a long drawn exclamation through his teeth.

He took out his jack-knife and literally cut chunks of pure gold out of the rocks.

"If this strike don't beat all the golden dreams I ever had! This may mean another ranch. Gold! Gold!"

He picked out a dozen nuggets, some as big as a pea, and slipped them into his pocket. At this moment he heard Uncle's voice from above:

"What are you doing down there? Hey Kid, what's up? We've paid out about a hundred feet o' rope and no signs from you yet."

"Pull up until I tell you," the Kid shouted back. "Now swing her over. Steady there. Don't jerk her so." He made a grab for the rope and missed it by about six inches.

The next time he was successful.

"Go ahead slowly," he shouted after he had the rope adjusted around his body.

"Jerusalem!" he ejaculated as they drew him over the precipice by his arms. "Look at this!" he exclaimed as he reached into his pocket and drew forth the nuggets for their inspection. "Don't they make your eyes smart, looking at them? They are some of my dreams, Uncle," he said sarcastically, as he put them

into the old man's hand. "How is Los; is he dead? O" he sighed, as he saw me lying on some loose ground in a niche of the gangway with Bristow bending over me, bathing my face and temples with cold water, in an attempt to bring me back to consciousness. "How is he, Mr. Bristow?" he asked, hurrying over to where I lay.

"Unconscious. Not a sign of life. He is pretty well battered up. His face is all cut up, and he has a deep gash on the back of his head."

"We'd better hurry him down to the cabin, where it's nice and warm and where we can thaw him out. That cut on the back of his head, he no doubt got by being thrown against the wall. How is it down there, Kid—rocky?"

"Yes, there are big sharp rocks jutting out all the way down, as near as I could make out."

They carried me down to the cabin, where they washed and dressed my wounds. They tried all means they knew of to revive me, without avail. I kept up a continual moan, every once in a while trying to reach the back of my head, which I was prevented from doing only by the continual vigilance of my friends. Sometimes I would mutter an incoherent word, like that of a person in a dream. My friends gave me the best of nursing they knew how, with their limited knowledge of such cases.

"We are in a deuce of a hole with him, here in our isolated condition, so far from civilization. He ought to be under doctor's care, then there might be some chance for him. As it is, I have very little hope for him," said Bristow the next day to the rest, as I became more violent than I had been previously.

"We can but do our best, boys. It'll take two weeks to get a doctor up here, from Dawson. In that time he'll be either dead or on the way to recovery," Uncle

responded.

I had been lying in this comatose state for one whole week, when one day I surprised Bristow by asking him for a drink of water. Bristow, who had been my steady nurse, and who had at the time been attending to some minor duties, was so agreeably surprised, that he jumped up as though a snake had bitten him. Hastening to my side, he stooped over me and asked me to repeat the request, fearing it might be imagination on his part. I repeated the request in a low voice. Bristow handed me a cupful of the refreshing drink. I was very weak. On being asked how I felt, I merely shook my head in the negative.

"Does your head hurt you very much?" Bristow asked me.

I looked at him with half closed eyes, not fully comprehending for over half a minute. Finally I opened my lips and whispered:

"Yes."

Bristow procured a clean bandage, saturated it with whisky and tied it around my head, after removing the old one. He watched me for a long time, and as he did so, he began to think of his dead sister and how we two best friends of his were being lost to him perhaps forever.

CHAPTER XVI

THE wealth of gold which the Kid had discovered in the rocks overhanging the ledge where he had found me unconscious, was nothing, compared to what was found after a more thorough investigation. Uncle, who was proclaimed the leader and also the engineer in all matters pertaining to our daily work, could not resist the temptation of immediately going down himself to make a more thorough inspection, as soon as my immediate wants were cared for. They immediately constructed a huge, rude ladder, which reached down opposite the ledge where I was found, as a means of descending without assistance from those above. They next cut short poles, long enough to reach from the ladder to the ledge, to enable them to get across. Uncle was the first one to go down the ladder, Bust and the Kid lowering the poles by means of the rope. As the poles were lowered, Uncle shoved them across by means of a light pole with a fork at the end. After laying a half dozen across in this way, Uncle called up from below that he had enough, after which he proceeded cautiously to work his way across. He stayed down for about an hour longer, when he suddenly made his appearance at the top of the ladder, unnoticed by the boys, who were discussing the accident to me and my chances of recovery.

"What have you found, Uncle?" they both asked eagerly, as he stepped on terra firma.

"What have I found!" he exclaimed answering the question by producing nugget after nugget out of his pocket.

"Lord! you don't mean to say you got all those down

there in this short time, do you?" Bust exclaimed, staring in open-mouthed wonder.

"I certainly do. Say boys, it's simply beyond my vocabulary to express myself. It's gold! gold! gold! and then some more gold, down there. Go down and see for yourselves, boys."

Bust eagerly jumped at this invitation, grabbed the lantern, and was immediately out of sight. In a half-hour's time he appeared, with another dozen small nuggets in his pocket. The Kid, knowing how it looked down there, Uncle suggested they'd better return to the cabin, and see how I was getting along, and also show Bristow the nuggets they had found.

"How is he?" Uncle asked as they entered the cabin door.

"He was conscious a few moments ago but he's dropped into a sound sleep again. He spoke but a few words. He is too weak yet. In answer to my question, he said his head hurts him very much," Bristow answered.

"Thank the Lord he's coming around at last!" Uncle exclaimed.

"How are you making out by this time?" inquired Bristow.

"Fine, Bristow, fine. It beats every claim in Alaska and the United States. We are ready to begin operations tomorrow. We hung a ladder all the way down, with poles across from the ladder to the ledge making it easy for anybody to get there. Look at this, will you?" he said producing the nuggets and throwing them on the table. "Bristow, I tell you we'll all be millionaires in a year's time. Tomorrow the three of us will go down and begin operations, while you'll continue nursing Los. We'll all stand in for equal shares."

Day after day and week after week, the three were busy, working the "El Dorado." Every evening saw

our pile of gold increased by thousands of dollars. I kept slowly but steadily improving. While I still complained of considerable pain in the head, that also yielded in time. Sometimes I would sit for hours near the fire, my head resting in my hands, without uttering a word, except when answering a question of Bristow's, and then only by yes or no. When in such a mood I seemed to be oblivious of everything around me, absorbed in my own reflections.

"Los, you ought to rouse yourself and take more interest in things. You don't even take any interest in the mine any more, and I surely think that would be something to create interest in a mummy."

"Bristow, if you think I'm sleeping when I sit like this, you are greatly mistaken. My mind is on something more important than a dozen gold mines. I am trying to trace out a crazy-patch quilt in my mind."

"How do you mean, Los?"

"Never mind what I mean. Some day I hope I'll be able to startle you all, after I get more of the cobwebs removed. I think it will be somewhat of a surprise to me, too. More I can't tell you at present."

Bristow did not press the subject any further, realizing the futility of it. Nothing further was said on the subject, and it was soon forgotten by Bristow and apparently by me. It was now in the month of April, and the short summer would soon make it's advent again. I was gradually becoming my former self again, the pain in my head having gradually yielded to their treatment, and I decided I was strong enough to wield the pick and shovel again.

"Uncle, I feel as strong as an ox again, and if you won't soon let me go along with the boys I'll become desperate and begin razing the cabin, or do some other undesirable trick. What say you Uncle, will you give me permission?"

"Next week you may try it. In the meantime you may assist Bristow in the kitchen.— No, no, that's final," as I started to remonstrate. "You just continue to be a good boy and obey your captain. I've handled such cases before. You imagine yourself stronger than what you are. Why man! you'd keel over the first hour."

I felt the truth of this statement, for at that moment I felt a weakness coming over me, due to my extra exertions.

"I guess you are right, Uncle. But it's a hard pill for me to digest when I see you all hard at work from morning to night, and a great big lubber like I am, passing away the time in idleness."

"You've done more than any of us," the Kid returned. "Hadn't it been for you accidentally falling down that shaft, we'd still be plugging away at the same rate of speed we were used to, while now we are bringing home thousands of dollars every night."

"Don't you think I could stand the exertion of going down in the mine to see what it looks like?" I asked Uncle.

"Not yet. We just got you on your feet, we don't want to get you on your back again."

About a week after I took a stroll by myself down the stream to the triangular patch of ground where we first struck camp and where I had the experience with the bears. It was a nice level plot of ground and it always had a certain fascination for me. I seated myself upon the log where Uncle and I had sat when he inquired the cause of my worry.

I had sat there probably a half hour, my thoughts having wandered far away to that unknown valley that I had seen so often in my visions. I gradually drifted into that subjective state which had become so habitual and easy for me. My face was buried in my hands.

Then suddenly, like a thunder-clap I heard the name, clear and distinct, twice in succession, "Jim Harper, Jim Harper."

I jumped to an erect position. I hastily looked all about me to discover the author. It had been the voice of a woman. Then came the revelation. It was like the drawing of a curtain off my mind. I pressed my hands against my head. "Jim Harper! Jim Harper! Why that is I. I am Jim Harper," I uttered in a hushed voice. Then: "Yes, here I am," I shouted.

Under the first impulse I started to run for the cabin to convey to Bristow the joyful tidings. The emotion brought on a spell of weakness and I became faint. I realized the truth of what Uncle had told me—that I wasn't strong enough yet. I reseated myself on the log. "Jim Harper. Yes, that is I. I am so positive of that as I am being seated on this log. But that voice, where did it come from?" It was a case of clear-hearing. To trace that voice to its author would be another great stride toward the answering of my seven-year long prayer. Again my thoughts drifted to that valley—those blue mountains along its eastern boundary; the long, straggling village with the well-kept road running through it; the little house with its flowery yard—"Ah, yes! I remember. Why that is my home. Flo, Flo! Yes I am coming home, home to you and the baby. Home, as fast as steam can bear me." I wept—a man's tears. My pent-up soul poured out its seven-year grief. Then came the remembrance of that vision where I saw her struck down by the man who had betrayed me and robbed me of my secret—"Ah! that secret! the secret that made him rich." The same man whom I had seen sitting in the rocking chair staring at the wall of the room, Jack Leach.

I remembered all now, my whole forgotten life. It again passed before me in a vivid panorama, the same

as it had that night in the forest, when my life was endangered by the wolves. But this time I remembered. It is not for me to tell here the different, strange emotions that coursed through my mind as I slowly made my way back to the cabin, my strength not yet permitting me to hurry.

As I remembered the history of my recently forgotten past, and that of the past seven years with its visions, its dreams, the dear associates I was with, the ridicule of Uncle when I revealed those visions and dreams to him, the hazy, familiarity of him and his by-word, "Nation," in the far distant past, I could not resist the temptation of playing a joke on them in the form of a tale, climaxing it with a surprise at the end.

They were all there when I arrived at the cabin, getting ready for the evening meal. After we had finished and everything cleared up, our pipes lit, I addressed myself to the crowd:

"Tonight boys, I will tell you a tale, the story of a young man whose life, or part of it, was so very similar to mine that it has been written indelibly on my memory. I read it that winter when I had made my home with those old people in central Pennsylvania. I want you to promise me not to interrupt me under any circumstances until I have finished."

They all promised and waited for me to begin.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME years ago as the story ran, a young man left the town of S——, in the state of New York, and wandered into that of Pennsylvania. He drifted from one locality to another until he finally procured employment amongst the Pennsylvania German farmers where he fell in love with and married one of their daughters.

This young man possessed considerable inventive ability which he developed to such an extent that by persistent labor and experimenting on rainy days, in a little, partitioned-off room in the barn, and throughout many sleepless nights of mental struggles he at last worked out the model of a machine which was to prove a great labor-saving device.

There were two obstacles that stood in the way of reaping the reward of his success:

One was his poverty and the other was his lack of influence and business ability to place it on the market.

He possessed a friend however, a very confidential friend, who had considerable influence and who also possessed to a great extent that business ability which he lacked.

One day he invited his friend into his little room in the barn and there he confided to him his whole secret, exacting a promise to keep it inviolate. While he was so ardently explaining every minute detail of the machine, and the purpose it was to serve, his friend's mind was busy in taking a mental inventory of every detail, asking numerous questions of the young man during his recital. After he had finished, his friend expressed his sorrow for the young man's lack of funds

to "push" it, and his own disability to assist him.

He left his young friend, reiterating his promise to keep the secret inviolate. On numerous occasions afterward he came and asked the young inventor to elucidate certain parts of the machine which had escaped his memory. The young inventor, not suspecting any evil designs on the friend's part was always too glad to impart to him the knowledge.

Months passed by, when one day he heard by accident, in the village store, of his confidential friend's very successful invention—the treachery and betrayal of his own confidence.

Without saying a word he left the store. He was crushed by the unexpected news. He immediately went home and told his wife, Flo.

"What can be done?" she asked.

"Nothing, people would not believe me."

That night he passed a sleepless night.

He resolved to leave home and seek a living for himself and family somewhere else. He apprised his wife of his resolution the next morning, turning over all the money he possessed, twenty dollars, all but a few odd pennies. He was to send for her and his child as soon as he had secured steady employment.

He left home that same day, his journey taking him toward the railway where he intended to beat his way on freight trains.

The heavy chug, chug, chug, chug of a freight locomotive tugging laboriously at a long string of battle-ships, announced its welcome tidings to the ears of the dusty, lonesome looking traveler as she came slowly crawling around the curve about a quarter mile above the station. The young inventor had had a long and wearisome journey that morning with the hot September sun beating into his face. He wore a sad and woe-begone expression on his usually bright, expressive face.

He had seated himself upon a pile of ties opposite a water plug, waiting until opportunity should present him with a free ride.

"At last," he sighed, slowly getting on his feet in preparation of getting on. While the engine was taking water, he found a snug retreat under the hopper of one of the big battleships in the rear end of the train. Here, he knew he would be sheltered from the sun while at the time he was resting his weary limbs.

He became drowsy, and settling himself safely and comfortably against one of the steel braces he fell asleep, the train meanwhile carrying him onward on his journey.

The train had stopped with a sudden jar, almost throwing the traveler off his seat under the wheels. How long he had slept he knew not. The rude shock had suddenly awakened him to a realization of his danger. It was night, and not knowing where he was, he looked about in a dazed way trying to take in his bearings. He found himself in a big railway yard. All he could see were sidings filled with long trains of cars. He slowly got up out of his cramped position and jumped to the ground where he stretched his tired limbs.

"B-r-r-r" he made, a chill passing through his body, chattering his teeth. It had rained during the night and the dampness was coming through, touching his skin.

He started to walk between two trains of cars. Finding an empty box car, he cautiously looked about and not finding anyone about he nimbly jumped inside, not caring where it might lead him so long as it gave him protection from the rain. Placing his little bundle, containing a pair of overalls and jumper, on the floor, he placed his head on it and coiled himself up on the hard floor.

He lay awake for a long time, the dampness of his clothes and the agitated state of his mind preventing him from going to sleep.

How long he had slept he knew not. He was rudely awakened by a terrible shock, followed by a horrible, deafening, grinding noise, such as only two trains, running at full speed into each other, can produce. In a twinkling he was on his feet and with one bound he gained the side door with the intention of forcing it open and gaining safety. Vain attempt. The door had been securely fastened from the outside, and besides, it was too late. With a wild cry of despair he saw his impending fate. Before and behind him the ends of the car were crushed like egg shells, into kindling wood. He saw the huge black hulk of a steel car shoved through the car from behind. Down, down it came like some living monster, crushing his body beneath it—and then oblivion.

When he regained consciousness in the hospital, his mind was a total blank compelling him to start out with a new career ahead of him, nameless and homeless.

For months he traveled, his wanderings taking him across the American Continent. He suffered many untold hardships and finally joined a party with whom he traveled into a far off country, where by good luck and thrift he and the rest of the party became very wealthy.

One day, in that far off country, he met with an accident whereby he received a severe shock to his head. For a long time he remained unconscious, hovering between life and death. Careful nursing and a sound constitution finally brought him around. One day during his convalescence he took a stroll by himself to a nice level spot of ground where he seated himself on a log. Here he soon became lost in reverie. He had forgotten all about his surroundings, when clearly and distinctly he heard a name called—the name of a man. It was

the voice of a female. He looked about in all directions to discover whence it might come. He understood. It was the voice of a soul calling to its far distant mate. Then he recognized it. The voice was that of his wife calling him, her husband. Slowly the curtain was being drawn away, the rays of light came shining down upon his beclouded brain, and he remembered all his forgotten past.

The startling revelation was too great a secret to keep long from his companions, amongst whom was one who, had he used his memory a little, might have helped to clear up his mystery years before. That is the story of this young inventor.

"What was his name" the Kid asked.

"I forgot to mention that."

I looked Uncle squarely in the face.

"His name was Jim Harper, the son of Jesse Harper, a farmer who lived in the southern part of New York state, about six miles from the town of S——— where he used to make semi-weekly trips on business and whom the son, Jim, a lad of fifteen years, used to accompany.

"They used to put up at a hotel by the name of the L——— house situated on V——— street. The bartender used to crack many a joke with the young inventor's father, while mixing cocktails, producing many a boisterous laugh from the guests.

"The bartender's name was John Waller, and by the 'nation' I can see him yet."

Uncle jumped instantly to his feet on hearing his name called, it not having been mentioned during these five years while in our company.

"And who the nation are you?" he asked excitedly.

"I am that Jim Harper, the son of Jesse Harper," I answered quietly.

"Why didn't you tell me that long ago?"

"How could I? I but received the revelation this afternoon."

Uncle's brawny, right hand shot out and clasped mine in a vise-like grip, almost crushing mine in his fervor.

"Los, I am down right glad to see you on your original feet once more."

"So am I, and I know all, as though I had never forgotten it. But please do not call me by that name anymore. It has become hateful to me. It was born out of my undoing and now since my past has been resurrected, let that name be buried in the grave of my resurrection."

"I have many things to tell you concerning my past that I have omitted in my story of the young inventor. It will serve for another evening's chapter."

"Do you remember, Uncle, the time I told you of my visions, the time you ridiculed me and told me they were hallucinations, fantasies of my brain?"

"Yes, I remember that?"

"And when I told you I might even announce to you your own name?"

"Yes, I remember that."

"I spoke the truth without knowing it. Whenever you used that by-word 'Nation' there was always something familiar about it. It seemed as though I had heard it in the far distant past. There was even something about you that appeared familiar to me. But not until today was the mystery cleared up."

"Some of the visions I had are faithful, the rest I also hope to have explained in the near future."

"I am going home, home to where I belong, home to those I have so long neglected. Who knows under what circumstances I will find them. Of their existence I am positive, because I have recently seen them in a vision. That they have been in great distress since I have left them I am equally as positive. Besides, I

have a heavy account to settle of another kind. There shall be retribution, stern retribution for the man who defrauded me and has been living boastingly on his ill-gotten gains.

"I saw, in large letters, the word emblazoned on the wall of his room, the night you and I, Bristow, laid down for some much needed rest, the time we were after your sister's murderer.

"So now, in a few days' time I will start for home."

"Not yet," Uncle said. "Tomorrow night you will tell us all about yourself and your outstanding account with your betrayer and then I will give you some sound advice. But start for home you will not yet, you are not strong enough to make the six thousand mile journey. A week or two delay will not make much difference in a period of seven years."

I saw the logic of Uncle's argument. He was right and I said nothing more on the subject that night.

It was getting late. The rest retired to their bunks while I went out into the hallowed night and there, with the Mariner's Compass—"The Great Bear"—almost directly overhead, twinkling in his brightness, and the bright moon to the south of me, I fell upon my knees and gave thanks to the Great Unknown—no not to the Unknown, for surely He is known—for His signal answer to my seven-year prayer, the prayer that had been my predominant wish all these years and which I felt positive would sometime, somehow be answered.

I returned to the cabin and retired to my bunk, not to sleep. Sleep was out of the question; for who could sleep on such a momentous occasion?

All that night my mind was in a feverish state, alternately beset with doubts and fears concerning my loved ones on one side and felicitous expectations on the other.

Was Flo still bound to me by those holy ties of love which she had vowed on the day of our union, or was I

to return home finding myself a second "Enoch Arden?" No, the thought was unholy, and I did her a great wrong for entertaining it.

Then again, what form of punishment should I mete out to the traitor, Leach, a man who had stood high in the community, and who had been looked upon as an exemplar for just and square dealing. Should I punish him physically or should I denounce him before all men, bringing upon him the silent condemnation and ostracism of all those who placed honor above all else? Or should I do both? It was a question for my home coming to decide.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE following night I gave my friends a more detailed account of my past, previous life. I especially dwelt on that part of it that had to do with my betrayal by Jack Leach. I told them of the visions I had had, my hopes and fears concerning my loved ones, the distress I felt sure they were in or had been in. I pleaded with Uncle to permit me to start at once. To the last he turned a deaf ear, reiterating that I was not yet strong enough to make the journey.

"You take my advice Jim, and follow my instructions, and all will be well. I assure you I can advise you out of experience. I can fully sympathize with you, because I also have gone through the mill; not in the same sense that you have, but equally as hard. What that experience was is neither here nor there, we are going to discuss your case tonight. In the first place, what do you intend to do with Leach when you arrive home?"

"I am not so sure what I will or may do after my arrival home; but there will be a reckoning with compound interest, of that I am certain. If he was here tonight, I can tell you what I would do. We would step outside the door, and there by the light of the moon we would settle accounts. One of us would not return to Pennsylvania."

"I am very sorry he isn't here. It would be a gratifying entertainment to me. Here, in this country a man is a law to himself, answerable to his conscience and his God alone. When you go back to Pennsylvania your legal and social status will be different. You will be answerable to the laws of the state, be they just

or unjust, I wish to warn you to keep cool. No matter what may happen, keep down your anger, don't let your passion run your head into a noose," Uncle warned me.

"I will not, of that I am sure," I answered.

"You do not know what you might do. You will get into a heated argument with him; one hot word will draw forth another, then you may forget yourself and draw that which you had better not have about you. You understand what I mean?"

"Yes, but I will not do that," I answered decidedly, sure of myself.

"You do not know, I am not so sure of you. I am sorry I may not be with you and help you to see this thing through safely. If it wasn't for the Kid, here, I'd have half a mind to go with you."

"Why don't you, Uncle?" the Kid asked. "We can take care of ourselves until your return."

"Because I promised your mother to return her boy safely. That's why.

"You can sue him and fight him in a court of law," Uncle suggested, once more addressing me.

"No I'll not sue him," I replied positively. "My father was a wise man, Uncle, and he always advised me to steer clear of the law. He always said going to law was throwing good money after bad. Therefore, no law for me."

"I guess you are right, Jim. Besides, if as you tell us he is an influential man, his word would be accepted by a jury in preference to yours. You would be considered a vagabond and a deserter to your post of duty. Besides, he will have money to back him."

"So will I. On that question, we will stand on equal grounds."

"That is so, I had forgotten that you are a Croesus."

"Why don't you give him a sound thrashing and done with," the Kid interposed.

"That would be too mild a punishment. It must be a chastisement suitable to the offence, retribution in large capital letters, as I saw it written on the wall; a punishment that will increase in severity as time passes by."

"That would be justice with a vengeance." Bust said for the first time speaking.

"It may be all that. But when I remember the torture I endured, crossing those arid plains, those alkali deserts, my soul like a Dives, praying for a drop of water to cool my swollen tongue, my feet, raw and blistered, my head racked with pain by the scorching rays of the sun,—going mad,—can you blame me for entertaining such thoughts against that man?"

"No," Bristow said, vehemently. "Give him his desert. Hew to the line. Let him be made an example to others."

Such was the various advice I received. As to my own promptings I could not make up my mind in what manner or form I would mete out that punishment. It would all depend on the conditions I found on my arrival home.

For five weeks I took things easy, not doing anything but exercising and thinking. Five long interminable weeks they seemed to me. All this time I was building strength and vigor, until at the end of the expired time I was once more in the pink of condition, fit for anything that might cross my path.

Our mine had yielded wonderfully, and after I had received my share, I found myself a rich man beyond my expectations. I was wild with the prospects of happiness before me. My wife and child became a beacon unto me, and for whom I was willing to brave the horrors of the desert once more if necessary.

It was with a feeling of relief that I stepped off the boat at Seattle. It had been a wearisome journey to

me between Dawson and the last named city. The days had seemed long to me, and the short nights almost as long. The nearer the boat reached its destination the more impatient I had become. The greater part of the time during our passage, I walked the deck, feeling like a caged hyena, besetting my agitated mind once more with those doubts and fears concerning my loved ones. What condition or circumstances would I find them in? Would they still remember me or had they given me up as dead? Would they still be in the land of the living, if so, were they still watching and waiting for me? Had my wife remained true to my memory, after all these years of absence, and without so much as hearing one word from me?

These and many similar thoughts of a like nature coursed through my mind, driving me almost to distraction. More than once my strange actions on board the vessel caused comment amongst my fellow passengers. But now, when my feet once more trod the firm earth, my nervousness vanished, and I felt more at ease. I became strong and self-reliant again, feeling like a new man.

I took a train for San Francisco where I was delayed until I had my gold assayed and had received its value, all in double eagles amounting to one hundred thousand dollars, nearly all of which I deposited in one of the National banks, receiving a certified check therefore. I now felt lighter after being relieved of a great burden, a burden that raised me to the clouds instead of depressing me.

I entered a clothing house and bought me an outfit from head to foot. I also bought a disguise,—a wig and beard well tinged with gray,—the object in doing so being to prevent anyone from recognizing me, especially my family, upon whom I intended to spring a surprise. I had always been a practical joker and here was an

opportunity where I could practice one with a happy climax, as I hoped.

Upon inquiring the departure of the next train east, I was informed there was none within four hours. This to me sounded calamitous.

"Four hours!" I muttered to myself, bestowing a half-doubtful look at the ticket agent, thinking he must have made a mistake.

"Four hours," he repeated, noticing my incredulity.

"It's a wonder they wouldn't run trains closer once in a while to accommodate passengers. Must be a one-horse road anyway," I muttered under my breath as I left the window to make room for others. "After all what does a difference of four hours mean compared to seven long years."

With that philosophy I comforted myself.

At last I was seated comfortably in a Pullman chair and the train pulled out. Every telegraph pole we passed brought me nearer home. I bought a paper and tried to read. I was utterly unable to concentrate my mind on the matter it contained. Finally, I threw the paper down and settled myself in the seat with the intention of taking a nap. My mind was in such a whirl, try as I would I could not sleep. Finally I roused myself.

"What a fool I am making of myself. I can no more change the course of events than I can change the structure of the moon. Time enough to worry after I get home, if it is necessary. Here I am imagining all kinds of calamities and everything may be in perfect order, according to my hopes."

The philosophy I used to preach to Bristow now asserted itself once more. It gave me peace and comfort as nothing else would. Once more I took up the discarded paper. This time with better success. When I finally laid it down I found I had consumed two

hours in reading it. These were the shortest two hours I had thus far passed on the train. I now became interested in the scenery and began to enjoy my journey. As we traveled across the desert, its arid wastes appeared ten times more forbidding than it did when I crossed it on scalded feet. Thus the time passed, day after day, until at last I looked out over a country that appeared familiar to me—Central Pennsylvania. As I studied my railway map and looked beyond the peaks of the mountains my memory recalled those kindly, whole-souled, old people who lived not more than seven miles beyond. "Fond recollections! I wonder if they are still alive? How I would love to greet them and receive them."

"Remember, my boy, if you ever feel lonesome again, or meet with misfortune, you know where to find Mirandy and I."

What would they think of me now, coming home with affluence and influence, lost, but found. It was with a pang of regret that I passed without giving them a token of my love.

Later on the scene became still more familiar as we passed through the Lebanon Valley with its green undulating fields, the corn tops waving in the breeze, and the ridge of the Blue Mountains boldly outlined against the horizon.

Still later I could see ahead of the fast moving train the mountains that encircled the valley, one of the garden spots of Pennsylvania, and to me God's country—that contained my goal, my Paradise.

It was exactly six o'clock when the train pulled into the station, distant about ten miles from my home and loved ones.

I had by baggage checked, telling the baggage-master I would call for it in a day or two. From there I proceeded directly to a livery stable, after first adjust-

ing my disguise.

"How much will you charge me for the best team you have in the stable and a driver to take me to C—— tonight," I inquired of the liveryman.

"Three dollars and a half," he replied promptly.

"All right, get it out," I replied with equal promptness.

CHAPTER XIX

“**Y**OU may stop here and leave me out. I will walk the rest of the way,” I told the driver as we arrived within a quarter mile of my home or what I expected to find my home. Before I dismissed him I gave him a two dollar bill.

“This is for you,” I said.

He thanked me, turned his team about and left me standing in the road, alone. I wanted to be alone. I wanted to have time to think and to calm myself. Now that I was so near home, I found myself almost a stranger. Within five minutes I stood before the gate, I quietly raised the old familiar latch and entered the yard. By the light of the moon, which was half full I recognized the well kept yard with the grass around the flower-beds neatly trimmed, the same old, homely, but beautiful flowers my wife used to cultivate, the graveled walk with its straight lines and right angles, leading to the rear of the house; all as it had been before I had left home, and as I had seen it many times in my clairvoyant visions. And this brought me back to her who was the half of my life—my soul—which had been such an incomplete existence for seven years, almost; and the little girl, the baby, with her brown curls which her mother took such particular pains with. I remembered how I used to stand her upon my shoulder and run around the room; how I used to chuck her up to the ceiling and then catch her as she came down all drawn into an animated little bundle; how Flo and I used to place her in the center of the dining table, teaching her to dance, and how she used to enjoy all this with gleeful peals of laughter. I still

imagined to find her as I had left her, forgetful for the time being of my seven years' absence, seven years to her as well as to me.

I quietly walked round to the rear, north side of the house, the door being on the south side. I silently crept up to the window, and now that the crucial time had arrived, that was to decide my weal or woe, my courage almost failed me, fearful of what the vision might disclose.

I rose and looked. My heart seemed to rise to my throat and I began to choke. At one end of the table sat my wife employed in making a new dress; the same features, somewhat sadder and more resigned; the same wavy hair, slightly tinged with gray. At the other end sat an old lady with almost snow-white hair, thin in face and body, mending one of the little girl's stockings—Flo's mother.

In the big rocking chair, occupying and usurping my place as lord of the home, sat my old, intimate friend, John Myers.

Beside him, with a picture book, one of the pictures of which he was explaining to her, stood the little girl,—my own child,—not as I had imagined her still to be, but a half grown up little miss of ten years. She still wore those curls, much longer and thicker than when I had seen them last. Every now and then she would laugh as Myers made some funny remark about the picture. This was the vision that was discovered to my eyes. With one fell blow my anticipations, my fond imaginations, that I entertained all through my journey home, lay shattered and broken before the window of my former home.

I felt like a second "Enoch Arden" and like him, the impulse for the moment seized me to leave as quietly as I had come, without a solitary soul knowing of my presence; to return to that far northern country, back

to those four friends, the only ones in whom I still had faith, and there in peace and quiet, far from the maddening whirl and twirl of a deceitful world, spend the remainder of my days

But it was not so easy to break away. The chains of memory held me bound to the spot. For a long, long time I stood there, gazing with longing eyes upon the scene inside. How long I gazed I knew not. Time signified nothing to me.

I saw Myers get up and reach for his hat which had been hanging on the back of a vacant chair. I saw him say something to my wife and her mother; I heard him give the child—my child—good-night as he passed out the door into the moon-lit night. I waited for a while, but he failed to come back. I walked round to the south side of the house and knocked gently at the door. My wife opened it. Momentarily, I had almost forgotten and impulsively I was about to reach out and crush her to my heart. Recollecting in time, I asked:

"Does Mrs. Harper live here?"

"Yes," she answered. "I am she."

"Jim Harper's wife?"

"Yes, that is, I was his wife. Come in," she invited me eagerly.

I stepped across the threshold of my own home and introduced myself as that of my own cousin from New York State.

"Ladies I beg your pardon for this intrusion at this late hour of the night. Jim and I used to be chums in our boyhood days and not hearing of him for over seven years, I decided to look him up."

After thus introducing myself, they gave me a very cordial reception, neither of them having penetrated my disguise.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Harper, but did you say you had been Jim's wife? Is he dead, then?"

"I am not so sure whether I am wife, widow or grass-widow. He left me and the baby nearly seven years ago, in quest of employment and since that time I have neither seen nor heard of him. I am still praying and hoping for his return."

All doubt was removed from my heart on hearing those words. She had been faithful. I walked up to her, and taking both of her hands into my own I said:

"Your prayers will be answered, for your husband lives and all is well."

"He lives do you say, then why does he not hasten to me? Why this mystery? You know? Tell me all, I can bear anything. But you say all is well.—Why don't you speak? Let me fly to him."

"Flo," I said quietly, and for the first time in my natural voice.

It startled her. She searched my face, hidden behind its mask for an answer. She had heard the voice of her husband, but she was looking into the face of a stranger.

"You know where my husband is? Why keep me in suspense? Tell me all so I may fly to him."

I could resist no longer. With one quick move of my hand I pulled off my disguise and stood revealed before her.

"Then come," I said, opening my arms wide.

"Jim," she sobbed. "At last!" burying her face on my neck and shoulder.

"Yes, Flo, at last I have come. Gone for seven long years but still remembered. Lost and found."

I gently removed her head and I looked deep into those expressive eyes, a moment ago so sad, now shining with a new strange light, a light that expressed her whole soul's peace and happiness.

"Where have you been, where do you come from?" she stammered.

I have come a long journey, from the land of the Midnight Sun and the North Star—from Alaska.”

I turned my attention to my child. She stood back timid and reserved, receding from me, a perfect stranger to her. It was natural. She had forgotten me during my long absence.

“Come, little one, I said. Let papa kiss you and play with your curls. We must not be strangers.”

She came forward dubiously to receive my affections. For a long time we stood there the three of us, neither of us speaking a word, our hearts too full for utterance.

It was getting late. The grandmother and the child retired and Flo and I were alone, and then I told her the strange story of my wanderings, and she told me her brave struggle for existence.

“You should have had a letter or card of some kind with you, Jim, to identify you.”

“Yes, I should. I did that before I left Alaska.”

I reached into my inner coat pocket and produced a letter.

“This letter would have identified me should any misfortune have happened to me this time. It would have brought me to you, dead or alive.”

I described to her my journey on foot across the continent, the terrible privations of the desert, how I laid down that night, utterly broken in body and spirit thinking it to be my last night on earth. I told her of the vision I had of her kneeling before the bed, hearing her calling me by name.

“Yes, that was true what you saw. The baby and I were in great distress. The larder was empty, we had not a crust in the house. We went to bed without supper that night, baby and I. Credit I had none to buy on. I felt so lonesome and forsaken that night. People began to look down on me, they called you a ne’er-do-well, a vagabond and a deserter. They advised me to

go to the poor-house, where they said provision was made by the public for such cases of charity like mine.

"Jack Leach in particular, began to harass me with his unwelcome attentions. He tried by all manner of persuasions to seduce my love for you. He insisted you had deserted me, that you had become weary of me and my affections. This I stoutly denied, telling him such conduct from you was impossible, and that something must have happened to you; that you were either dead or that something equally as dreadful had happened.

"He had bought a large farm and he pleaded for me to make my home with him and keep house for him, stating that his mother was getting old and infirm and entirely unfit to assume the burdens of a farmer's home. I told him plainly it couldn't be and asked him to cease his attentions. He saw I loathed him. He quarreled with me and called me a vile name. I ordered him out of the house, and then he—"

She hesitated.

"And then," I answered, finishing her story, "he assaulted you. You fought him. The blood ran down over his face and he threw you against the stove. Am I right, Flo?"

"Yes, but who told you?"

"Yourself, dearest. Telepathy. It was the communion of your own soul with mine, unconscious to yourself, semi-conscious to mine. I saw all in one of those wonderful visions I had. And I saw a young man come in, and I saw him take him by the back of his neck and turn him round. I saw him speak angrily to him and then I saw them leave the house and walk across the road, and there I saw him strike Leach down twice."

"How wonderful, Jim! That was John Myers. He came to my assistance and he gave Leach an unmerciful beating, and ever since he has left me alone. John

Myers was the only real friend I had. He still had faith in you and kept it unshaken all these years. He said it was for old friendship's sake that he befriended me."

"He was here tonight," I said.

"How do you know?" she asked.

"I saw him through the window, Flo. And forgive me, I thought you had proven unfaithful to me."

"Oh, no Jim! I would have remained faithful to the end."

"I will never doubt you any more, Flo."

I told her of the vision I had that night while tracking the murderer, Brown; how I saw Leach's barn burn down; how I saw him afterward in a room in the house gazing at the wall; how I saw the word "retribution" written in large capital letters thereon; how later on I followed him up into the attic, how he tied a rope to one of the rafters and hanged himself; how he vainly tried to free himself in his efforts for breath; and how I finally saw him hang limp and lifeless.

"Thank the Lord, Jim, that vision didn't come true, it is too horrible. With all his evil nature, all he has ever done against you and me, I would not wish his sinful soul to meet his Maker as a self murderer. Your vision must have been an imagination, a fantasm of the brain."

"No, dearest, it was no fantasm of the brain, no imagination. It was clairvoyance. I can distinguish between the two. The one is a mental picture which you can call up at will, the other is an eye picture that is plain and distinct as though thrown upon a screen, and reveals itself unbidden. Time will tell, the end of Leach is not yet."

I told her of my fall down the subterranean cavity, my unconscious state, the wonderful wealth we discovered as a consequence to my fall; my miraculous re-

covery and the wonderful revelation to me of my past forgotten self; how I heard her call my name; how my memory began to clear and I recognized the name as that of my own; how I gradually remembered all and how impatient I became to fly to her and the baby.

She was seated on my lap with her head resting against my shoulder, her eyes looking up lovingly into mine, drinking in every word I uttered. She knew I spoke the truth.

"How strange and wonderful it all is. My Jim!" she repeated time and again, as she stroked my hair. "And now you are safely back at last."

I showed her the certified check. She read the amount of my wealth—our wealth—and gave an incredulous "My, all that amount?" and snuggled still closer to me.

"And how is it that I find you so comfortable after all your poverty?" I asked.

"The third winter I passed the district examination and qualified as a public school teacher. Three terms I taught, receiving thirty-five dollars per month. The money I earned by teaching, together with the interest I received on a legacy of three thousand dollars, left to me by my old bachelor Uncle Louis, relieved me of all necessary wants. The second winter was the worst of all. Both the baby and I were sick. We were reduced to starvation and no money to pay for the doctor or medicine. John Myers came to my assistance. He loaned me fifty dollars."

"Bless him for that, I will return it to him tomorrow, with compound interest."

"It is all paid in full, Jim."

"It makes no difference, Flo, I shall repay it again."

"After I got well," she continued, "I went out and performed such menial work as the neighbors offered—washing, ironing and scrubbing, and occasionally sew-

ing at home in the evening."

"Did you go out to scrub, Flo?"

"I had to Jim. I did it cheerfully, for the sake of the baby."

"Brave little woman," I said. She became dearer to me than ever.

CHAPTER XX

DURING my long homeward journey I had scrupulously worked out a plan concerning my future dealings with Leach. The farm and stock which Flo told me he had bought I considered as rightfully belonging to me. His wealth was the fruits of the sweat of my own brow, and represented several years of toil, mental concentration, and many sleepless nights. I was therefore, determined that he should not be permitted to revel in his ill-gotten gains at my expense, if I could prevent it. I had planned to undo him.

The following day I accordingly paid a visit to my friend, John Myers. I found him at home. He failed to recognize me in my disguise.

"Mr. Myers, I presume."

"Yes, sir," he answered, surveying me critically from head to foot.

"Mr. Myers, I came to talk to you about Jim Harper and Jack Leach."

"You must excuse me, I do not wish to discuss my neighbors with strangers. Why not see Jack Leach personally? He will no doubt tell you all about himself he wishes the public to know. As for Jim Harper, I know nothing. He disappeared seven years ago and no one has ever heard of him since, not even his wife to my knowledge. Why not see her?"

"Jim Harper has returned, and that is why I am here," I said, removing my disguise.

"Jim!" he exclaimed grasping my hand. "How glad I am to see you! I thought of you this morning."

"They say, 'When you think of Satan, his imp is sure to follow,'" I said, humorously.

"And the same practical joker."

"I could not resist the temptation. I played the same joke on my wife last night."

"What a surprise it must have been to her."

"It was. She could not realize, when I discovered myself to her."

I had to tell him all about myself. Then:

"Now will you discuss Leach with me?"

"Cheerfully," he answered.

"You know why I left seven years ago."

"Yes, your wife told me all about it, afterward."

"I wasn't sure of my own actions, coming in contact with him every day. I feared I might commit an act that would work me irreparable harm. I therefore, determined to leave and avoid him. I have returned a wealthy man, and with that wealth and the influence it will give me I mean to undo him. I will do it slowly but surely. I will make him the pariah of the community, despised and ostracised by all just and well meaning people."

"I think you will not have much trouble. He is on the downward way now. He drinks heavily and deals wildly in stocks, two factors, each one of which will eventually ruin him."

"I will help the good cause along. The sooner it is accomplished the better," I replied.

Myers told me of Leach's nightly carousals at the hotel in company with a crowd of parasites, spending money and drinking whisky freely. The following Saturday night there was to be a ball, when there would be a great gathering. I decided to be there and start one of my own. I cautioned Myers to keep everything secret and not tell anyone of my return home. I readjusted my disguise and returned home. It was a Wednesday. Three days more I would wear my disguise, and then on Saturday night I would re-

veal myself to the complete discomfiture of Leach. In the meantime I would keep in hiding, having already cautioned my wife and her mother and my child not to mention my name to anyone. Should anyone ask concerning me, I was to pose as a cousin.

Saturday night came. My wife begged me not to go. "Don't worry about me," I said.

I assured her I was fully able to take care of myself and would keep out of a row.

"All I desire to do is to uncover myself to Leach and let him know that his nemesis is following him."

I arrived at the hotel rather late, about ten o'clock. I had especially selected this hour so as to arrive when everything would be in "full blast." I entered the bar-room, the whole building throbbing and quaking in rhythm to the motion of the dancers above. The long bar, across which there was a steady stream of liquor being dispensed, was lined up from one end to the other with drinkers.

I cast a quick glance along its length until I recognized Leach at the far end, surrounded by a crowd of hangers-on, the roustabouts of the village. Leach had just ordered the rounds and was in the act of paying when one of his friends slapped him on the shoulder and remarked in a jest:

"I hope, Leach, we'll all have an opportunity before long of drinking a toast to your wedding."

"When he marries the grass-widow," another said.

"She is too much of a wild-cat, she fights like a tigress. How about that, Leach?" a third said.

These remarks touched Leach on a sore spot.

"Cut that out, boys," Leach said angrily. "I'll not brook it. Give us another drink, and be lively about it," he said, addressing the bartender.

I saw Myers quietly seated in a chair in a far corner of the room, as was prearranged. He appeared not to

notice me as I walked up to him, an apparent stranger.

Everyone eyed me critically, except Leach and his crowd, who had thus far failed to notice me.

I addressed a few casual questions to Myers in order to begin a conversation during which I introduced myself as a cousin to Jim Harper. Several of the bystanders hearing me introduce myself, one of them immediately walked over and apprised Leach of the fact. He was in the act of drinking a glass of beer. I had purposely spoken loud so as to be overheard. It produced the desired effect. Leach immediately set down his glass, half emptied and gave a hurried glance in my direction. I appeared not to notice him. The news embarrassed him.

Within a few minutes' time I became the target for everyone's eyes. They eyed me like an escaped wild animal from some menagerie. I kept on talking to Meyers, apparently totally oblivious of their close scrutiny.

I now deemed it time to put my little plan for the evening into action—that of introducing my real self to the crowd. I slowly rose out of my chair, and in a voice audible to everyone in the room, invited everyone to have a drink on me. It met with a ready response, each one being immediately eager to accommodate the “well met” stranger. Meyers and I edged ourselves close to Leach, seemingly by accident.

I raised my right hand and begged their attention for a few moments.

“Boys, I am a perfect stranger here. I came here with the object of visiting a staunch old chum and cousin of mine. I was shocked, on my arrival, to hear of his strange disappearance nearly seven years ago. Whether he is still in the land of the living no one here seems to know, no one having heard from him in all these seven years. Now boys, in remembrance of the

happy years he and I spent together, our close comradeship, our little ups and downs, our joys and sorrows, I propose a toast—you no doubt all know whom I mean—to the memory of Jim Harper.”

Everyone immediately raised his glass, with the exception of Leach.

“I will not drink that toast, may I strangle in the act if I do so,” Leach shouted so everyone could hear him.

“I beg pardon, boys, but I was unaware of the fact that Jim had any enemies. In one of his last letters to me he wrote of the many friends and the good will of all the people he had won. Would you mind telling me your name?” I addressed myself to Leach.

“Certainly not. My name is Leach, Jack Leach.”

“It is very strange. You are the very person he mentioned as being one of his most sincere and confidential friends. A man of sterling qualities, a man of influence, one who was the embodiment of honesty. I remember in connection with your name, he made mention in the same letter of an invention, a little model of a machine, he had perfected after years of toil. This letter must have been written shortly before he disappeared. It appears inconceivable that such an enmity should have sprung up between you and him as to make it impossible for you to drink a toast to his memory. I do not wish to appear as trying to pry into your secret affairs, Mr. Leach, but you must pardon me for being just the least bit curious to know what the disagreement was.”

“That is not for me to say. Mrs. Harper will no doubt be very obliging to tell you should you ask her. She was prompt to tell everyone else. It is all a fable, a concoction of her and her husband’s minds. I have no more use for Jim Harper nor anyone else of his kindred.”

“I am a Harper too, Mr. Leach. You surely would

not visit your anger upon me for something Jim might have done."

"I will make an exception in your case."

"Would you drink a toast to me, to my memory?" I asked.

"Yes, I'll drink a toast to you," Leach said.

"Give him another glass of beer, bartender. The one he has is flat."

Leach drank it, a little sullenly I thought.

"Thank you," I said. "I believe you are sincere, Mr. Leach. It went down like oil. Mr. Leach you have now drunk to the memory of—"

"Jim Harper!" Leach gasped, as I took off my wig and false beard and threw them on the bar.

"In flesh and blood," I replied, with a dozen meanings. "No doubt you had rather seen his ghost, it wouldn't have been quite so tangible.

"The man whose confidence you betrayed seven years ago, who left his home to avoid coming in daily contact with you, fearing he might commit some irresponsible act for which he would pay all his remaining days;—the man who was lost, dead to the world for seven years—has found himself alive once more and has returned."

Leach turned white as a sheet. The sudden revelation I sprung on him, the stinging words I addressed to him in presence of a barroom full of people, the majority of whom despised him, sobered him completely. He stood abashed like a little child, having not a word to say in self defense.

"Boys, you have all seen that I have come back, and you, Mr. Leach, remember you have toasted to the memory of Jim Harper. Good-night."

I left the barroom for home, John Myers accompanying me.

"Jim, that was the best trick I ever saw pulled off. Leach almost sank to the floor. He'll think he had

nightmare."

"He won't think it long. That was just the opening of the game. From now on I'll be after him like the blood-hound on a scent. I went there tonight for the purpose of springing this surprise on him, not to see the ball. That had no interest for me. There will be no noise attached to his undoing, no shouting, no angry words in argument. I'll work on his conscience, slowly, quietly but effectively. He will be his own undoing. His own conscience and his profligate habits will do it. I will simply act as the man behind the puppets, watching the course of events and helping them along."

There was a beautiful mansion in the village for sale which I bought. It was an aristocratic, quiet, peaceful looking mansion, set well in from the road with a spacious lawn in front and on the sides. It was built of stone and had a wide veranda running along the front and one side of it, with up-to-date stables in the rear. This home I decided was necessary to my future social standing. I also sported a pair of pure-bred bays. These I drove every day, making it a special point to pass Leach with them wherever I found opportunity.

People began to talk about me. I became popular and influential, two things my money bought for me. Those who used to look down upon me previously, now saluted me with familiarity, and even took me into their confidence and asked me for advice in a business sense. To these I related my story, confidentially. I told them of Leach's betrayal of my confidence, the reasons for my leaving home and my seven years of absence. I bought bank stocks and became a director in one of them. I was now in a position to undermine Leach's credit. The leaven began to work slowly but surely. People ostracised and shunned him. Even his drinking companions, some of them discarded him. He gradually found himself alone. He began to look downcast and

worried. People began to lose interest in what he had to say, excusing themselves one by one, under some pretext or another. He began to drink heavier and heavier, trying to drown his sorrows in liquor, often times not being sober for whole weeks.

The following summer in August, one night while I was sitting on the porch with my family, who should come in the gate but Leach. He was perfectly sober. The light was shining through the window and I could see by its reflection the havoc his evil ways had made on him. His eyes were bleared and his face was bloated. He looked the sheepish, abject coward that he was.

"Good evening," I said.

"Good evening, Mr. Harper."

I thought it strange, he had never addressed me as Mr. Harper before.

He asked to see me privately.

I led him into the house into a private room. He cast his eyes round and failed not to notice the peaceful, comfortable appearance of my home.

I offered him the most comfortable chair in the room.

"Now Jack, what is it?"

"Jim," he said, in his old familiar way, "I plucked up courage to come and ask you for a great favor, I am in sore straits, financially. I have asked different others but they plead disability to help me out.

"So I have come to you tonight, the last one I would have thought of appealing to. If you deny me, I must go under. I have a little mortgage on the farm and they threaten to foreclose. A few thousand dollars would enable me to weather it until spring and by that time I would be in a position to fix up matters."

"Let the blow fall," I thought. I knew all about the mortgage and had known it for several weeks. It amounted to two-thirds the value of the farm.

"I have also come to ask your forgiveness for the

great injury I have done you. Will you, Jim? I'll go down on my knees if you want me to."

"It is not necessary," I answered. "The hand you have bitten has turned into a running sore. Why did you wait until the hour of your extremity to ask my forgiveness. It is rather a late hour to come to me. For seven long years I and those dear to me suffered through your treachery. Now, when the game is up, when you have come to the end of your rope, you think by speaking a few words of contrition our old familiar friendship will be established. Leach, when you have atoned to me and mine for the injury you have done me, then come to me and I will give you my hand in friendship once more and also the financial aid you have asked me tonight. I am sorry, but I can do nothing for you. Good night."

That ended my last interview with Leach. Two weeks later the sheriff posted his hand-bills announcing the public sale of Leach's farm.

"Leach's farm is to be sold by the sheriff and I intend to buy it," I announced to my wife. "It is the best farm in this vicinity and to be the owner of it will enhance our social standing—we'll be more aristocratic. Besides, it will be but buying back our own property. It should have belonged to us in the first place, since it was bought with our money."

CHAPTER XXI

THE sale came off at the stipulated date. It was finally knocked off to me for four thousand dollars less than what Leach had paid for it. If Leach's looks could have killed, I would have died on the spot as the name of the purchaser—that of my own—was announced by the auctioneer. His farm stock was to be sold a few weeks later to satisfy the rest of the creditors.

That night I found myself still awake in bed at a late hour pondering over the different events that brought about the downfall of Leach, and the part I had played in it.

My room, the window of which was facing Leach's farm—now mine—was suddenly lit up. I watched it for sometime as it increased, partly died out, and then shortly lit up brighter than ever. What could it mean. I jumped out of bed and looked out. The whole heavens were red. It reminded me of those "lights" I had seen so often in that far northern country. There was a small patch of woods intervening between my home and the farm, which shut off the view, especially during the summer when the trees were thick with leaves. The farm was about three-quarter mile distant. I could plainly see the sparks and the thick, heavy smoke as they rose over the tree tops. I immediately woke my wife and told her that our barn was on fire, and that I would run over and assist in saving what we could.

It took me but a few minutes to dress and dash across the fields to the scene of action. And action there was, plenty of it. It appeared as though the whole village had turned out, great and small, old and young, forming themselves into a bucket-brigade fire

department. With the stamping of the horses, the bellowing of cattle, the squealing of pigs, the shouting of some of the men here and there, giving orders, it was a strange and weird sight.

I was sizing up the situation with the intention of offering my services where they were most needed, when I saw John Myers come running out of one of the stables, his clothes on fire. The nearest ones rushed to his assistance, trying to put out the fire with their hands, even some with buckets full of water setting them down and assisting the rest with their hands. I had been standing at a distance; I pushed through the crowd, seized one of the filled buckets and dashed the contents over Myers.

"Thank you, Jim," Myers said looking up and noticing me for the first time.

His mind instantly reverted to the helpless animals in the stable.

"There are three more in there, can't some one assist me in getting them out?"

"I'll help you, John," I offered.

"No, not you, Jim, let some one else help. It is dangerous work."

"That is just the kind of work I want. Lead the way," I replied.

For a moment I almost regretted having offered my assistance in liberating the remaining animals. The heat was so great it scorched us, while the smoke nearly suffocated us. However, I determined where Myers led I would follow.

"Hurry up," Myers shouted back as he led the way through the heat and smoke. "I'll untie them and you'll help me to drive them out. Cattle are awkward things to handle in a fire."

The cattle were tied to their mangers with chains, and Myers found it not such an easy thing to untie

them, with the chains pulled taut in the vain efforts they made to free themselves. Two of them he had managed to untie, but the third and last one gave him considerable trouble. It was a full grown steer and was not so easy to pull up to the manger as the others were.

"Hurry Jim, get behind this one and put your weight against him."

The fire had by this time almost surrounded us and was beginning to hem us in.

"For God's sake let's hurry and get out of this, I am almost suffocated," I gasped.

The cattle, now being free, resisted our efforts to drive them out of the stable, being spell-bound by the fear of danger.

"Can't someone out there help us to get these cattle out?" Myers shouted. "We'll have to leave them to their fate if we don't get them out in a jiffy."

Two young fellows came running in at this summons, their bravery being stimulated by the whisky they had drunk, one of them being so drunk he was hardly able to stagger along.

"You are a fit subject to come in here, you are," Myers rebuked him as the fellow fell against one of the steers.

"What you call us in here for then, if you didn't want us. Guess I can take care of myself," he snarled back.

"It takes a sober man in a place like this, we have no time to waste on drunken fools like you," Myers hotly retorted.

By yelling and shouting, and shoving and twisting their tails we at last got them safely out, the whole business having consumed less time than it takes to tell it.

I was thankful it was over, my hands and face being

almost blistered by the heat.

"Three cheers for Myers and Harper some fellow, who was also three sheets in the wind, shouted as we issued out of the stable, my hair singed and my lungs gasping for fresh air.

While Myers and I had been getting out the remaining cattle, the rest of the crowd had been making frantic efforts to liberate the horses. Myers and I had not come out of the stable a moment too soon.

The fire had started in the mow, in that part right above the cattle's quarters and had gradually eaten its way down. Just as we issued out of the stable, several of the heavy joists came down with a crash, throwing out sparks and clouds of smoke and heat to such an extent as to scatter the crowd in all directions.

I walked over to where they were getting out the horses. I spied Leach, standing somewhat back of the crowd, out of the heat and danger, with a heavy scowl on his bloated face. Just as I came up one of the men came running out of the stable and asked for Leach. Someone pointed him out to him. Hurrying up to him he asked:

"Jack, couldn't you come in and help us to get that big, bay mare out? She is too vicious, and won't let any of us come near. You can do with her more than any of us because she knows you."

He half turned fiercely upon the man. However, he had sense enough under the circumstances to keep his counsel. He stood there undecided. If only the heat and the danger hadn't been so great. His aged mother was standing beside him.

"Why don't you go and assist the men, Jack? They are doing all they can for you. Don't let the poor beast burn alive."

He turned upon his mother fiercely, taking a rude hold upon her arm.

"You better go into the house where you belong. This is no place for old women to interfere in men's affairs. Let the old hag burn if she hasn't sense enough to come out. My life is worth more to me than what she is."

The old lady turned quietly as though to walk away, when she saw Myers in the crowd, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

She walked up to him.

"Mr. Myers, can't you save her? She and I were such good friends. She was always so faithful."

"I don't know, Mrs. Leach. I can try, if she lets me come near to her."

I had been listening to everything going on. I came forward and again offered my assistance. I was a great admirer of Myers, both as to his physique and his sterling qualities as a man. I had long ago found him to be true, honest and courageous, and where he'd lead I was ready to follow.

"Jim, this is dangerous business. The other end of the barn is coming down now. See that?" as a loud crash, accompanied with smoke, flying sparks and debris announced the truth of Myers' words.

"I know, but lead on,—quick," I answered.

We hurriedly entered the stable. Everybody had come out by this time on account of the heat and danger, leaving the mare to her fate.

The mare had broken loose by this time and stood huddled up in the rear corner of the stable, shaking with fear and terror. Myers took hold of the halter and tried to lead her. She refused to budge.

"Jim, you take hold of the halter, while I get back of her and urge her."

The mare was obdurate. She planted her fore feet firmly, resisted all efforts and entreaties. We were almost in despair in our ineffectual efforts for saving the mare. The fierce heat and the danger of being

burned alive had become so great that it had become a matter of saving ourselves, let alone that of saving the mare. As a warning, a loud crackling noise was heard in the feeding entry, announcing the approaching collapse of that part of the barn. We both realized what it meant to us. Myers shouted for me to run. We were not a second too soon. One end of the heavy beams came down, striking the mare on the hip. This accident, or fortune rather, served the exact purpose which we had in vain tried to effect. The mare, driven to distraction in her terror, raised herself on her hind legs, gave one mad plunge, and made for the doorway, knocking me down as she rushed by me. The crowd outside, saw her coming and made room for her, catching her as she rushed through. Leach, now that the danger was past, summoned enough courage to come up to her and lead her away. After he had disposed of the mare in a safe place, he returned to the crowd. Myers, after receiving the profuse thanks of the old lady, for saving the faithful animal, walked up to Leach as he approached the crowd. Leach was just about to offer his thanks and excuses for not entering the stable himself, whereupon Myers, with a wave of his hand cut him short.

"Leach," he began, "I never met as great a coward in all my life as you are. I heard the answer you gave your Mother when she implored you to save that faithful old animal from the flames. I have taken an account of your actions tonight, ever since I am here. Not a single live animal have you tried to save. Not a single hair of your head to be singed, not a particle of your precious skin to be blistered, have you offered in an effort to save these dumb brutes from such a horrible death. I wish to inform you that they are all out and safe. As for the rest of your property, that may burn, and you with it into the bargain for all I

care. I am going home."

"Mr. Myers," I said, don't be too hasty. We should try and save the house, which is in great danger of burning down. The eaves have already been on fire several times."

"Let it burn," Myers answered hotly as he stalked away. "I've done all I'm going to do." He had forgotten for the time being that I had been the purchaser.

No one tried to persuade him any longer. They knew him too well. No one blamed him for acting thus. The greater part of the crowd had very little sympathy for Leach. Everyone knew the circumstances through which Leach had been able to buy his farm, now mine. Many had come out of love for adventure and excitement, some had come with the intention of saving the live stock. Many of them, had they followed their inclination, would have imitated Myers' example. I felt sorry that such things were. I felt sorry for Leach, because I looked upon him as a type of moral degeneration, and was not altogether responsible for all his actions. At the same time, why should he care? It was not his property they were saving.

Leach was stung to the quick at the rebuke he received from John Myers. Had he received it in private, he would not have minded so much; but in public, before all his neighbors and former friends—it aroused bitter memories of the past. He now, if ever, fully realized the loss of his former prestige in the community. He left the crowd at the barn and started to join that at the house. His fear of shame partly overcame his cowardice. He now joined the ranks, fighting the fire, trying to save the house. He was here and there and everywhere giving commands, once in a while thrusting himself in where there was the greatest danger.

The big barn with all the adjacent buildings were

burned down leaving nothing but a mass of burning cinders and debris. The house was saved. The crowd had dispersed in the early hours of the morning, leaving Leach and his mother to themselves. Leach was tired out.

Some half dozen of us were left, long after the rest of the crowd had gone. We were standing on the outskirts of the ruins discussing Leach, and the future probabilities of his conduct, when someone asked where he got to. Another answered he had gone into the house nearly two hours ago. I proposed going in. I wanted to see him very badly. The origin of the fire looked very suspicious to me, and I wished to ask him a few questions.

We all passed into the house. We found his mother alone in the dining room, wringing her hands and bewailing her sad fate. Her incoherent answers to our questions gave us no clue to the whereabouts of her son. We searched all through the ground floor without finding a trace of him. We searched the second floor, his own private room being the last one we entered. Here we saw a huge rocking chair—exactly as I had seen that night in my vision—drawn up to a small square table, upon which stood a whisky bottle half full and an empty glass alongside.

"We have still the attic to search," one of the others remarked.

I had forgotten all about the attic, and as he mentioned it, the vision with all its horrible ending forced itself terribly upon my mind. I secretly prayed that this one vision might turn out an hallucination, a fantasm of my brain.

Yet part of it had come true. That chair was the identical one I had seen with my spiritual eyes, although I was sure I had never seen it with my material ones.

I naturally felt a loathing sensation to proceed any

further. However, I said nothing and followed. And there, before our gaze, suspended by a rope attached to one of the rafters, hung the limp and lifeless body of Jack Leach, his eyes bulging and his tongue hanging out, exactly as I had seen it that night when Bristow and I were tracking his sister's murderer.

Stern RETRIBUTION, I muttered half aloud as I turned to descend.

THE OCCULT HAND

I

“**T**HEN, Professor, you think it can be done?”

“I think so. I could not guarantee the result. So far it is but a theory on my part. However, it appears to me all things are possible. You know Christ told us of a time coming when greater miracles than His would be performed. Why may not the time be now as well as any other? Mind over matter is not a theory any longer; it is a reality—a positive fact. Man’s actions are performed by the actions of two great mental forces: the Objective and the Subjective. The Objective mind is in control during your conscious or rational state; the Subjective during your unconscious or irrational state. The Objective mind reasons; the Subjective mind is incapable of reasoning.”

“I don’t quite understand, Professor.”

“No? Well, I’ll try to explain. Did you ever have a dream in which one of the characters changed its form—say for instance some beast changed into human form?”

“Certainly,” I admitted, “I had one of that kind not so very long ago.”

“Well, your mind didn’t reason that such a thing was an utter impossibility, did it?”

“Why no, Professor, it did not. I’ve often wondered why it was that we never think in our dreams that such things couldn’t be.”

“Well, that is the Subjective mind. In a conscious state such a thing would be an impossibility. Here is this stick of wood in my hand. No amount of persua-

tion on my part would convince you that it was anything different to what it is—a piece of wood—would it?”

“I doubt if it would, Professor,” I answered, convinced that no one could fool me on a simple proposition like that.”

“Under hypnotic influence I can, though. At my suggestion that piece of wood will become a red-hot poker, and with it I can produce blisters on your body. I have done it in cases. Don’t get scared,” as he noticed the alarm in my face. “I shall not produce any on you at any time. I am only telling you this to inform you of what can be done. Of course, you would have to be perfectly under my influence; subject to my will. That would be an instance of mind over matter. All doubt would be removed for the reason that your mind would be incapable of reasoning otherwise. I could do the same thing with you in a conscious state if I could remove all doubt, but there lies the difficulty. You might try to believe ever so hard but still the doubt would remain, and the efficacy of this piece of wood would be nil so far as the application of heat would be. By faith we can move mountains, and faith is belief. Under my influence you will believe, because your Subjective mind will not be able to reason differently. Do you understand now?”

“I think I do, Professor.”

“And now, after explaining the subject to you, do you still wish me to try it? There will be no harm resulting therefrom, I assure you, even if we should be unsuccessful. It will be an experiment without the slightest danger to you.”

“If you’re sure of no harm to me, I’ll let you try.”

“I am perfectly sure. You can set your mind at perfect rest on that score. You will be under my complete control, and any suggestions I will give you,

either mentally or orally will take effect. I can demonstrate to you later on by proofs better than I could by talking a whole week to you," he concluded, as he fixed his glittering, black eyes on me, much in the manner of a snake when charming a bird.

The Professor was a tall, slim person, with black hair, black, searching eyes that seemed to look clear through you, dark complexion and clean cut features. No matter when you met him, he was habitually well dressed, whether in his office or out on the street, and he always wore a button-hole bouquet which had the effect of finishing off his genteel appearance. He had the gift of being a ready and fluent talker on any and all kinds of subjects, whether it was scientific farming and fancy poultry raising, politics, or his own particular brand of charlatanry—occultism. Yet with all these gifts and perfection, he had that "Don't tread on me; mind your own business" air about him that caused people to be more or less averse to him. Whenever anyone set an argument in opposition to his theory he would confound them by citing a dozen different authorities substantiating his line of reasoning, thus putting a quietus on his adversary in the start, after which he would continue to explain and instruct as though he was the teacher and they the pupils; he the fountain head and they the recipients.

To come back to my story. He certainly did demonstrate to me after he got me into his power. Even now, years since it has happened, his glittering, black eyes haunt me, even in my sleep, producing a strange and weird effect on me which it takes all my resolution to dispel sometimes. Even his laugh was something sardonic, accompanied by a sound, something between a yelp and a hacking cough. I've often wondered since, what impelled me to give myself into the power of such a fiend—for fiend he was, nothing more nor less.

Well, I left his office, promising to return the following evening to surrender myself to his will and power.

The time of my visit to the Professor happened to be in mid-winter. While being in consultation with him it had started to snow, the pavement being already covered with light, fleecy flakes as I came out of his house. The first thing I did was to take a fall, both feet shooting from under me before I had time to realize to be careful on account of the slippery pavement, precipitating me with the force of a catapult on the stump of my right arm, the extremity of which had been lost two years before through an accident on the railroad, by getting it between two bumpers as they were coming together. The Professor had made his appearance in town about three months previous to this consultation and had immediately begun advertising his occult powers and what he was able to perform through them in the way of healing all kinds of incurable diseases, such as cancer, consumption, leprosy,—if there'd be any in the vicinity,—and last but not least those chronic complaints,—lame back and headache. He soon had a lucrative business established. His office became overrun with patients from far and near, especially with female patients. People became afflicted with diseases they never knew they had. They also found out that there were diseases that the medical profession were yet ignorant of. Often, in diagnosing a patient's case, he would give it some hard-sounding name, the patient forgetting it as soon as he had heard it, yet which produced its effect by either giving the patient a very self-important air in way of possessing something that was denied to others, or produced certain effects through mental suggestions.

One day I accidentally met him on the street whereupon he asked me concerning the loss of my hand. We

had quite a little chat regarding the profession he professed to follow, winding up with the promise on my part to see him in his office, where we could talk the matter over in private, as he called it. The talk he gave me was so embellished and flowery; it whetted my appetite to such extent that I could hardly abide the time set for the appointment.

Well, I sprawled unto my feet again, hugging my sore and wounded stump all the way home, my mind occupied with doubts, fear, hope, and the pain in my arm. My wife was impatiently awaiting my return and immediately began to shoot questions at me in rapid-fire succession. She was not quite so gullible in believing all such "tommy-rot" as she styled it, warning me at the same time to be cautious in surrendering myself body and soul to that man. Her advice was like throwing chaff into the wind. It blew in all directions save in the one aimed at. I found out afterward, I was a fool for not taking it. She knew more than I did, but at the time, I thought I knew it all. I told her I was determined to brave the consequences. I paid the fiddler, dragging her in as my banker. The two years following were the meanest and most miserable of all my existence, past, present, and I doubt not, the future. The tortures I suffered were worse than those of the Spanish Inquisition.

So much for the preamble to the next two years of my life.

II

IRANG the Professor's door bell—my second visit to him. He opened the door in person. A more affable person I never met in all my life than he was as he smilingly, or rather grinningly bid me enter.

"Please take a seat and make yourself perfectly at ease," he said as he turned up the light. "I have been waiting for you, although I was a little dubious about your coming on account of the storm we had," he continued, rubbing his hands together in a self-satisfied way, no doubt enjoying the prospect of having me for a subject to practise his hellish designs on.

These little particulars I didn't notice so much at the time they occurred, being as yet unsuspicious of their meaning. But now, after I have been put through the mill, I thoroughly understand their significance.

"Do you still wish to place yourself under my influence?" he asked, as though surprised at my consent, and that all responsibility for any baneful effects were to be placed to my account.

"Certainly, I'm here for that purpose, if you are certain there will be no harmful effects," I answered.

"Not in the least, not in the least, sir, I assure you. Besides, it'll not cost you one penny. The results attained will be of equal value to us both. You, if the outcome will be successful, will be the possessor of a new hand, whilst I will be the gainer of such scientific knowledge as will startle the world. My name will go down in history as a conjurer in occult science, and as one of the greatest benefactors of the age; a name for future scientists to ponder over. In view of your lack of knowledge on the subject, a knowledge that few

people possess or understand, you can not realize the importance of such a discovery. I do. It will revolutionize the art of healing. It will be equal to raising the dead to life. Think of the boon to humanity: the maimed, the halt, the blind; thousands of instances whereby poor wretches could be brought out of their despondency into a realization of happy lives."

He continued to talk in such glowing and flowery terms that all doubts and fears, whatever remained, were dispelled. I was spell-bound. To think that I was the first one to come under the benediction, my name going down in history side by side with the Professor's tickled my vanity not a little. If but my wife could have heard him talk! What would she think now? Of course, I didn't understand half of what he said. He used so many technical and scientific terms that much of his talk sounded like ancient Greek to me, which he no doubt used to impress me with his superior knowledge.

"We might as well begin at once," he said, "Are you very positive?" he asked.

"Positive? Pardon me, I don't quite comprehend," I answered, ashamed of my ignorance.

"I mean are you set in your opinions: determined. Have you a considerable will power?"

"Oh, certainly, certainly, Professor, I have a very strong will," I answered as the full meaning of the word dawned upon my stupid mind.

What other man would not have asserted the same thing? What man would admit that every Tom, Dick, or Harry could lead him around like a cow by the halter?

"In that case," he answered, "I may have a little trouble in putting you to sleep. After I once have you, there will be no trouble afterward. Please take that rocker and place yourself in the most comfort-

able position you can assume," pointing to a large Morris-rocker that stood in a shadowy corner of the room. "Now," continued the Professor, after I had taken the chair, "please think of going to sleep and exclude all other topics from your mind."

For about half an hour he tried his best to put me to sleep, without avail. I suppose he summoned all the different incantatory words and acts to his assistance he could think of. Several times I peeped from under my eye-lashes and each time I noticed that the perpetual grin had entirely disappeared. In its place was a grim determination on his face. It is hard to say who of us two was the more tired, he or I. He finally gave up in disgust and produced a hollow glass ball. This, he explained, was an automatic magnetizer on which I was to concentrate my thoughts thereby inducing sleep. This also proved futile. I simply refused to go to sleep. I suppose I was too positive. He didn't say. I know I felt as though I had grown a foot in stature since he first suggested the idea to me earlier in the evening. I felt as though I had become a man in one night. As it was getting late I bid him good-night, promising to return the following evening to renew the experiment. On my way home I stopped in at the tavern and drank a bumper of whiskey, something I had not indulged in for the last five or six years.

On account of not having tasted any liquors for such a length of time, the whiskey soon produced a peculiar effect on me. Not in the way of hilarity, as it does on some people, nor surlily or dizzily. It made me feel more conceited, more determined, as the Professor defined it. It was the paramount subject on my mind. Hitherto almost everybody had been able to sway my opinion in an argument. From now on I'd assert my own opinion and stand by it like a man. And I'd begin in my own home. I'd let my wife know that she

had a man for a husband after all. To be sure I'd not be rude to her, nor ill treat her in the least bit; in fact, I'd be more kind to her than ever before, if that were possible. But I'd be more firm. I arrived home, and the first thing I did to announce my presence was to stamp the snow off my shoes vigorously. I don't think she understood the meaning of its significance. I did. I braced my shoulders, took a deep breath, threw out my chest, and walked in. My wife was sitting at the table sewing. On account of the lateness of the hour she had begun to worry, fearing something might have happened to me at the Professor's.

"Why John, how late you are! It's going on twelve o'clock. I thought you'd never come home."

"Have no fear for me, my dear," I answered bravely.

"Mary,"—Mary was my wife's name, without any prefixes or suffixes to embellish it. Just plain Mary.

"Mary, do you know what a positive man is?"

"Why yes, I think I do. But what a foolish question to ask at twelve o'clock at night."

"Never mind the time; tell me what a positive man is."

"A positive man is one who is half conceit, and half fool; one who is too stubborn to be convinced when he is wrong."

This definition of the word, so different to the Professor's partly knocked the conceit out of me. Whatever else I might be, I was not going to pose as a fool. It exasperated me. I stepped over to the big rocker, yanked it up to the stove and threw myself into it. We both remained silent for about five minutes. Perhaps it was well that we did. It gave me time to cool off, and also time to ponder over the proposition. My wife was the first to break the silence.

"What made you ask such a question? Didn't you know the meaning of it?"

"Who, I? What a preposterous question to ask of me. Certainly, I knew, but I wanted to know whether you knew."

As I sat by the hot stove, the heat from the outside, and the heat from the inside of me seemed to concentrate in my head and gave me a quarrelous disposition. I was determined not to give in so easily after having formed my new resolution. I was tired and my head began to feel heavy.

"Mary, you are wrong,—but take off my boots and let's retire. It's getting late."

My wife looked at me in a quizzical way. She would not understand.

"Why John, can't you take them off while I put away my things?"

"Mary, take off my boots," I said in a firm voice.

My wife came up to me in a hesitating, timid way.

"John, what has that Professor been putting into your head? You have never acted like this before."

She smelled my breath and began to cry, walking back to the table in a crestfallen way.

I could never bear to see a woman cry, least of all my wife. I succumbed completely, my new resolution shattered like a vase. I removed my boots myself, bestowed a lot of endearing terms upon my wife, and bliss once more reigned in our home.

III

THE following night found me once more in the Professor's office encountering the same diabolical grin on the Professor's face. After a few common preliminaries he proceeded to business—that of putting me to sleep. This time he was more successful, although not entirely so. After waking up I had a faint recollection of hearing talk, although what it was I could not remember. I felt no noticeable effects after his partial success. Probably he had refrained from exerting any of his power on me as yet. The following night I was there again. This time he had me fast and secure, and from this time on my trouble began and stealthily increased. I became subject to the most hellish and devilish influences that a man can put himself under. Many a time, when free from his influence and I was permitted to act under my own free will, which I often times was permitted to do, no doubt with the intention of torturing me by showing me my folly, I resolved to assert myself and break the spell by which he had bound me body and soul, and never have anything to do with him any more. Vain resolutions. I could no more break loose from him than I could pull myself up by my boot-straps. Such resolutions only lasted during such intervals as he permitted. I was under his power I supposed, when his mind was unoccupied by any other business. Even when under his influence, I, all the time, knew perfectly well what I was doing, yet I was entirely helpless to control my actions, oftentimes doing the most ridiculous things imaginable. Whenever the spell was removed and I returned to my normal self, I felt as though coming out of a dream, remembering all,

perfectly. At night, I was as a rule, perfectly free and my natural self. After I had been to see him involuntarily for five or six weeks, he told me it was not necessary to come oftener than once or twice every two weeks. I felt greatly relieved at this welcome news, thinking I might possibly be able to break the hold he had on me. He seemed to divine my thoughts and answered:

"Don't worry on that account. I shall be able to reach you at any time and place I desire."

About this time I felt a queer sensation in my arm—the arm that was minus the hand—extending from the shoulder down to the extremity. It was something akin to a rheumatic pain when denoting a change of weather. Sometimes it became so intense that it prevented me from concentrating my mind on anything else. I went to see the Professor one night, about it. The consolation he gave me was:

"O, my dear, the leaven is working!" rubbing his hands together, a fashion he had when expressing more than ordinary satisfaction. "Be brave and take it all philosophically. This is only the beginning. Think of the benefits you'll derive and what it'll do for science."

"To the devil with science," I thought. "If this is but the beginning, what'll be the end. My sufferings were already enough to set me crazy."

I went home in a disconsolate state of mind. I made up my mind I'd be free, and if I'd have to kill him. The following day I met him on the street. He greeted me very cordially, asked me how my arm felt, and gently cautioned me not to harbor any designs on his life, and passed on.

"My God," I thought to myself, "can I not even think without that man reading my thoughts?"

I turned round, my eyes following him as he leisurely

strolled away. If I had had a pistol at the time, I would have killed him. I wished it then, and as the thought entered my mind, I thought I heard a faint cackling laugh. I wasn't positive, although it served to increase my ire against him.

Things continued to go on thus for several months without any change in my condition, either mentally, morally, or physically. One day I happened to examine my wrist more minutely than I had been wont to, and was startled by its appearance where the hand had been severed. I noticed a knotty, gnarled growth somewhat similar to the out-growths on trees, the skin becoming hard, and calloused, and chafed. I hardly know whether I was frightened or surprised at the appearance. I immediately ran into the house to show it to my wife.

"What do you make of this, Mary?" I asked as I showed her the stump.

"I don't know," she said, shaking her head. "When did you first notice it?"

"A moment ago," I answered. "Perhaps we have judged the Professor too harshly after all," I said as the light dawned upon my mind. "That must account for the pain I had in my arm. I'll go and show it to the Professor tonight," I continued.

That night I showed it to the Professor, who was overjoyed to see the results of his occult power, as he described it.

"It is extraordinary! extraordinary!" he exclaimed.

His black eyes fairly sparkled, and he almost must have rubbed the palms of his hands through in his delight.

"Ah, my friend, didn't I tell you, you required patience? Will you believe in me now, after this demonstration?"

"Yes, but the pain, Doctor. I can hardly bear it any longer. It will set me crazy. I can't get any rest

at night."

"O, bother the pain. You can't expect anything for nothing. Forget it, think of something else."

That was invariably the answer I got whenever I mentioned my sufferings. However, I was in the toils, shackled, hand and foot, and I had to endure it whether I would or no.

From now on the pain which I thought was severe, became unendurable, oftentimes impelling me to walk the floor at nights for hours at a time. My wife, like myself, became almost distracted out of sympathy for me. Sometimes I almost became raving, cursing the Professor to the lowest depths of hell in my impotence. At certain intervals the pain was not so severe, sometimes leaving me altogether. Had it been, I think I'd have committed suicide and ended it all. It came on at irregular intervals, no doubt whenever he was at liberty to exert his mind in my direction. Whenever the pain in my arm came on my mind appeared to be free from his influence and I was at liberty to act of my own free will. Whenever my will came under his influence, the pain in my arm ceased. Sometimes I was completely unpossessed, mentally and physically. Those times were like the sunshine through rifts in the clouds. They made me long all the fiercer for the liberty I had been robbed of. I could have been happy at those times had it not been for the two-edged sword that was hanging suspended over my head. The hours I was perfectly free were about eight out of the twenty-four. With all this pain I suffered, and my obsession I took particular notice of the changes in my arm from day to day, and noticed that the hand was gradually increasing. The growths slowly developed into five processes, corresponding to the five meta-carpal bones.

IV

ONE day the Professor must have decided to shift the course of my actions on a new tack altogether. At least they began to run in quite a different groove altogether. Hitherto they had been erratic enough, but from now on they began to assume the ludicrous. One day I suddenly conceived the crazy idea of having some fun, all to myself. The idea was no sooner conceived than acted upon. I forthwith began running up and down the street, shouting to every one I met, at the top of my voice, "Make room, make room for the noble Petronius," at the same time brandishing a club in a threatening way over my head. My intention was not to harm anyone, but merely to see them scamper. Needless to say, everyone ran for cover in double quick time, the women and children especially, falling over each other in their efforts to escape my supposed insanity. I finally wound up in the little hardware store which the town contained. The hardware merchant was at the time busily engaged listening to the glib tongue of a drummer who was vainly trying to unload some of his wares upon him—goods that he didn't want and which he knew he was unable to sell in such a one horse town. I listened to the embellished speech of the drummer for a while when, pretending to get angry at the unfair advantage he was trying to get over the unsophisticated merchant, I walked up to him and demanded in self righteous indignation:

"How dare you, sir, presume to have the audacity to enter our peaceful village with your undesirable wares, trying to foist them on one of our most honourable and successful businessmen?"

There wasn't much said in consequence of my butting in, on the part of the drummer. He was a pretty husky guy and appeared to be able to take his own part creditably under almost any circumstances. He sized me up for about half-a-minute, the very picture of patience, probably expecting an apology on my part. The conciliatory spirit not showing on my part in either my actions or words, he quietly slipped off his coat and his hat, and laid them both carefully aside; after this he took a decidedly threatening attitude from which I suspected that he would do me up in fine style. At this moment the merchant interposed and apologized for my indiscreet words, indicating by signs that I was not altogether responsible for what I did, thereby saving me from a most deserving and ignominious thrashing. I immediately began to sober up and resumed my normal condition. I hung my head in shame and left the store, humiliated to such a degree that I was unable to utter a word of thanks to the merchant, or an apology to the drummer, but cursed the Professor for bringing such disgrace upon me. I straightway made a bee line for my own domicile where my wife, who had already heard of my escapade, gave me a thorough lecture, out of principle I suppose, she knowing as well as I did that I was not responsible for my actions.

Several days after this I chanced to pass one of the neighbors' cows with a bell attached to her neck. Every time she reached out for a blade of grass the bell would give a harsh tingle. The more I listened to the music of the bell, the more I became imbued with the idea of possessing one myself to carry out a certain idea that immediately formed itself in my brain. After having completed my purchases I immediately hastened home to begin carrying out my plan. I remembered having an old bell similar to the one I saw on the cow,

stored away somewhere in the barn, although I could not remember just where. I diligently began to ransack every nook and corner and finally drew it out of a cob-webby box that had been used as an old junkshop for storing all kinds of odds and ends. I took a great deal of delight in making my preparations, ever and anon laughing aloud to myself as I anticipated the fun I was going to have that night. I kept the matter a secret, making my preparations in a quiet corner of the barn, allowing not even so much as a tingle of the bell to escape for fear my wife might hear and suspect.

There was a certain farmer living about half-a-mile out of the village against whom I had conceived an unfounded prejudice. He was considered fairly well off by the neighbors, so far as worldly goods were concerned, he considering himself the wealthiest man in the community, a fact which he never failed to impress on your memory whenever he had the opportunity. Whether this was the cause of my prejudice I do not know, but I know that I took a special delight in forming the scheme to rub it in on him. Across the street, and opposite to his house he had a large field planted with corn which had grown to such a height as to completely hide a man walking through it. That night I excused myself to my wife, explaining that I had some little business matter to attend to, whereupon I went out to the barn and got the bell and an oil coat to protect myself from getting wet, it having rained that day, after which I started out on my fool's escapade. I cut across the fields so as to escape being noticed by anybody. When I arrived at the place of operation it was about half-past-nine. The night was pitch dark and a fine drizzle was coming down which served my purpose to perfection; which was to give the farmer a harmless, chilly bath. I crept up to the fence at the edge of the corn field opposite the house and found the

occupants still up. I could see the old man in his rocking chair, reading his paper and smoking his pipe. He appeared to be very contented as he sat there in his chair and I certainly envied him. I waited and watched for about half-an-hour when I noticed the light to disappear down-stairs and reappear shortly after on the second story. Ten minutes later everything was in darkness, by which fact I concluded everybody had retired. I waited about fifteen minutes longer, when I decided to begin operations.

At this moment I heard some one coming along the road. This new factor facilitated my plan. I sneaked back into the corn and waited until he was opposite me when I gave a sudden bound in imitation of an animal suddenly alarmed, at the same time jingling the bell violently. Presently I heard him call out to the old farmer:

"John, hello John! There's a cow in your corn-field."

Presently I heard the window being raised and the old farmer calling out: "What's the matter out there?"

"There's a cow in your corn-field," the man answered back.

"I guess there's too much corn inside o' you" the old man retorted hotly, irritated at being called out of his sleep.

To convince the old numbskull that the man in the street knew what he was talking about, I gave the old bell such a vigorous shaking, at the same time running along the edge of the field parallel with the fence, that there remained no more room for doubt or argument in the old man's mind.

"Thunderation! that's Hen Spade's old cow. I know it by the jingle of that bell," he called down to the man below.

Immediately I heard the window come down with a bang, followed by the clatter of broken glass on the paved path below. I could have roared with happiness at this result, had I dared. About five minutes later I saw him come out in his pajamas, carrying a lantern.

"I'll fix her for him," he continued to the man. "What business have people to leave their cattle out on the street at this hour of the night, breaking through other people's fences?"

I heard him ask the fellow to help get the "D—d cow" out. The man declined politely, on the plea of it being too wet a night to run around in a corn-field. The old man was therefore compelled to tackle the disagreeable job alone, an arrangement that suited me perfectly. Him I could see, on account of having a lantern, whereas the other fellow might accidentally stumble upon me, thus exposing me, a thing which I desired to avoid. Whether the Professor had any control over fate so far as shielding me from exposure was concerned, I do not know. Certain it is, I was always saved at the opportune moment.

I immediately raised the curtain for the second and most important act in the drama, by giving a violent shake of the head accompanied by a bellow, in imitation of a real cow, jingling the bell with all my might, and starting on a wild rampage between the rows of corn with the old farmer in hot pursuit. I ran about two hundred yards, when I stopped and turned to get a view of the other end of the stage occupied by the farmer. He must have been a pretty good runner, judging by the scant distance I was ahead of him: about twenty-five yards. I held the old bell muffled, ran ahead about a hundred yards more, crossed six or seven rows, then I began the race once more by running obliquely across the rows, jingling the bell for all I was worth and doing all the damage to the corn I

possibly could. The old Nick must have had possession of me. I felt as though I would have liked to ruin that whole corn-field. I knew it was wrong for me to worry an old man like that, yet I could no more refrain from doing it than a duck can escape a pond of water. The old man was in hot pursuit, although at a safer distance. I could see the rays of his lantern through the corn. Once I saw him fall. His foot must have become entangled in the broken corn-stalks. I saw the lantern drop out of his hand and roll along the ground. He slowly got up and I could plainly hear him go through the whole gamut of curse words. I could have danced with joy had not a faint streak of my conscience or will asserted itself. Instead of giving vent to my hilarity I was moved to sincere compassion for the old man, who must have been wet to the skin by this time, as the corn was very wet and a heavy drizzle was still coming down.

At this time the Professor must have withdrawn his influence, leaving me free to the guidance of my own will. I began to realize more and more how wrong it was to play a joke of this kind on an inoffensive old man like the farmer, a man who had never done me the least injury. I began to feel very mean about it and was half prompted to confront the farmer and confess all and try and make amends for my misdeeds the best way I could. Since I was not responsible for my actions, I finally decided to keep the secret and discontinue my depredations for that time. I therefore beat a hasty retreat for home and my beloved Mary. I could not desist from giving the bell another vigorous shake in way of emphasizing to the old man that the cow was still in evidence, after which I made for the fence at the other extremity of the field, leaving the old farmer to deal with the imaginary cow as he thought best.

V

MY wife was in bed and sound asleep when I arrived home. I crept into bed with as little disturbance as possible, for fear I should awaken her and become subject to a whole lot of undesirable questions from her. I felt something akin to a trusted old dog returning from a sheep-marauding expedition. I soon fell asleep, never waking up until the next morning. This was one of the few restful nights I had had ever since the Professor had taken me in his hand. Whether my wife knew of my late return I did not know. It was not mentioned when we rose in the morning, although she gave me several mistrustful looks. After breakfast she had occasion to go down to the store for a few articles. I noticed, the moment of her return, that there was something more than ordinary in the wind.

"John, where were you last night?—Where were you?" she demanded as I refused to answer.

A bright idea had entered my mind. "Now or never is my time," I thought as the old, dominant idea of positiveness entered my mind. Straightening myself to my full height, I addressed her sternly:

"Mary, I would like to know by what right you address me thus, your lawful lord and master. You are becoming a little too positive for your sex. When I married you, you placed yourself in my keeping, trusting me to protect and support you. You will therefore deem it wise to obey me in the future instead of trying to command me."

"When I married you I thought I had married a man; one who appreciated a good wife when he found

one, but I find I have yoked myself to an imbecile, an idiot, a lunatic, one who didn't even have sense enough to come in out of the wet."

This was too much for me. I inferred she meant my escapade in the wet corn-field the night before.

"Enough Mary. Into the house with you at once before my just wrath impels me to chastise your insolence."

Without another word my wife started, with a down-cast face, for the house, sobbing out her grief as she went.

For a moment I stood there irresolute. I felt like a whipped cur. My own sense of justice upbraided me for the cowardly attitude I had assumed toward her. I had acted like a savage; a brute. I slowly conquered my false pride—my positive, stubborn determination which I had harbored ever since my first visit to the Professor. I began to realize what it might lead to and it vanished like a wreath of smoke. She had conquered by her most powerful weapon: her tears. Had she continued the way she had started out, by scolding and upbraiding me, I never would have given in. But who can resist a good woman's tears? I couldn't. I followed her into the house and found her sitting in the rocker, still weeping. I gently put my arm around her and addressed her in the most soothing tones.

"Mary dear," I said, "Please forgive me this once. I know I acted like a coward. I shall never insult you like that again. Won't you forgive me, dearest?" I pleaded as I put my hand under her chin and lifted her face, giving her a kiss.

The effect was magical. I was greeted with a radiant smile through her tear-stained face; like the sun breaking through the clouds. She appeared more beautiful to me than ever before. We had both won. She had conquered my pride, and I her tears.

"Mary, what do you know?" I asked her in the gentlest words, giving her another kiss for good measure, and also to win her extra good will.

"I don't know what you mean, Mary. What did I do?" I asked, trying to throw her off the track by pretending ignorance.

"Oh John, I know all. At least I think I do. By what I saw yesterday and what I heard this morning, I can put two and two together and the rest I can guess."

"What did you see? What did you hear?" I asked eagerly.

"I saw you fixing up that old bell out in the barn, yesterday. This morning when I came down to the store I heard old Mengle giving an account of the event to the grocer. It's a shame, John. He said he was wet to the skin from head to foot, and that he fell and sprained his ankle. He is hardly able to walk and has to use a cane. He threatens to sue Hen Spade, claiming that it was his cow that caused all the mischief."

At the word "mischief" the ludicrous side of my nature again asserted itself. As I rehearsed in my mind the events of the preceding night I could not control myself any longer and gave vent to loud and uncontrollable laughter.

"John, I can't see how you can enjoy anything like that," my wife reproved me with: "Can't you realize that you have gotten another innocent man into trouble? Oh, why don't you break loose from that wicked man?"

"Would to God I could, Mary. But I can't," I answered bitterly, suddenly brought back to a full realization of my iron-clad fetters.

"There is only one way I can think of to free myself, and that is—"

"How?" She asked searching my face for an answer, as I hesitated.

"By killing him."

"Oh no, no, John, not that. Think of the great crime that would be—and the consequences."

"Yes, I have thought it all out—crime, consequences, and all—and it is the only solution I can arrive at, barring my disability to commit the crime, which I doubt very much I could accomplish. Why, Mary, he has such complete control over me that he even reads my thoughts before they are fully conceived."

"Your thoughts? Why how can he do that?"

"I don't know how he does it, but he does it all right. Several weeks ago I passed him on the street and I was thinking to myself: 'How I would like to kill you,' I turned around and found him looking after me. He told me I'd better not try any such game on him."

"Couldn't we move away from here, John? Out of his sight and influence?"

"What good would that do? He could reach me just as easily as he can here. No, Mary, I see no hope of escaping him that way. We must hope for something else to turn up."

VI

DURING all this time my hand was gradually developing, although it was far from symmetrical. It was a monstrosity. I hated the sight of it. It had neither correct size nor shape. It was much larger than my other hand, and in shape it was something similar to a flounder: broad, flat, and straight. The fingers were long and thin, and entirely out of proportion to the palm of the hand, without the least development of nails at the extremities. It had an unnatural, shiny appearance as though it was covered with a coat of varnish. So far as usefulness was concerned, it stood me in as much stead as a sixth finger on a hand would. There was life in it, in fact too much, as I had had demonstrated to me during many a sleepless night. There was a slight circulation in it but I had no voluntary control over it. No matter how much I willed there was no response. It was a handicap to me by persistently getting in the way and continually stubbing against everything that came in its way, invariably causing excruciating pain.

It served but one earthly use, and that was as a curiosity to the inquisitive neighbors, whom I tried to shun as much as I possibly could with but partial success. I could not get rid of them altogether without being decidedly rude, as they persisted in obtruding themselves into my house without any invitations. I became prominent on one jump and had lots of friends. I never knew I had so many. Neighbors who seldom looked at me, and never recognized or spoke to me, now came and cheerfully accepted of my unwilling hospitality. Each and everyone wanted to know the history

of the hand and have a look at it. I got so used to rehearsing the story that I could repeat it and think of something else.

"How strange!" some said, after looking at it. "Do tell!" others exclaimed. "The idea!" still others commented, and all shaking and wagging their heads wisely.

Most all congratulated me on the success of the experiment without taking into consideration the demerits of the case and the pain I endured, the sleepless nights and the loss of my own free will. Some of the ladies, usually the most inquisitive, after looking at it, would turn away with a shudder remarking that it looked horrible and that they couldn't bear the sight of it.

I remember one young lady especially, who remarked that she didn't think it very remarkable after all, and had she known before what she knew now, she "wouldn't a'bothered comin' in to see it." This expression slightly increased the temperature under my collar, and I could not help from expressing myself somewhat freely and rudely.

"Young lady," I said—she was about thirty—, "I am very sorry you wasted any of your valuable time under my roof in such an idle quest. Furthermore, you will please remember that I have not asked anyone to look at my hand which I greatly prefer to hide from the prying eyes of idle curiosity seekers."

Needless to say, she immediately asked for her hat and wraps and never darkened my door again. I escorted her to the door and bid her a hearty good-night, she responded with a haughty shrug of her angular shoulders. I was well rid of her together with some others who overheard my rebuke. It made no difference to me; I was fast losing my patience. To have people obtrude themselves into my house and to be insulted by them on top of it was more than I could

or would stand for.

I was getting sick and tired of it all, and often wished Mary and myself on some lonely island in mid-ocean, free from my pretending friends, and with my liberty restored. My wife and I were on the best of terms again. Now and then I became possessed with a bit of positiveness as I called it then; I have since discovered that it was nothing more nor less than a streak of stubbornness instilled into me by the Professor. However my wife knew how to handle me by this time. Whenever I got my spell, she went into one of her tearful fits. I suspect it was put on for effect sometimes. Be that as it may; I am not sure that I can prove it. I never could bear to see Mary in tears and invariably yielded, becoming as gentle and forbearing as an affectionate husband should be.

VII

MY hand now being fully developed, I was relieved of that acute pain from which I had suffered so long, but mentally, I was shackled more firmly than ever before. It seemed as though my least actions were subject to his will. Not a moment that I could call my own. Oftentimes when conversing with my friends on some topic, I would unexpectedly, without any cause whatever, veer off unto another subject entirely irrelevant to the one under discussion. This always placed me in a very embarrassing position, the more so because I was fully cognizant of what I was doing without being able to prevent myself from acting thus. My friends, at first, gave me a knowing smile, leaving me with the excuse of other important and pressing business. Finally they tabooed me altogether. I didn't blame them. No sensible person enjoys a conversation with a lunatic. I gradually, but surely, became still more erratic in my actions and in my speech.

Nor was this the sum of my afflictions. I have said that the acute pain had ceased. So it had, but it now gave place to an irritating sensation which in some respects was almost as bad as the former pain. It was something between a tickling and a scratching sensation that served as a continual reminder to me; just enough to barely allow me to sleep and to bring me back to a full realization of my deplorable condition the first thing after waking in the morning. That condition gradually became worse as time slowly wore on. If I ever cursed anyone, I cursed that Professor, not once, but a thousand times. I went mad, mad in the fullest sense of the word. I lost all control. My wife was the

only one who could do anything with me, and that didn't count for much.

That positive spirit the Professor had instilled into me was about to react upon himself. He had overreached himself. Nothing on this side eternity would stop me from accomplishing the purpose I had resolved upon. I would kill him without warning if I could muster sufficient will power of my own to overcome his influence, and thus send him to where he had kept me bound for the last two years. I kept my resolution a secret from my wife.

I had a thirty-two caliber revolver hidden in one of the bureau drawers, and with this instrument I determined to free myself if possible. I sneaked upstairs while my wife was preparing the noon day meal. The revolver was not to be found at its accustomed place, my wife no doubt having hid it on account of my mental derangement, not deeming it safe for me to have it. For a moment that stubborn, determined spirit almost got the better of me. I was on the point of going down and demand in peremptory tones the hiding place of the weapon. That would have ruined everything by putting my wife wise, even if not to the exact truth as to what I wanted it for. I swallowed my anger, although it choked me not a little to do so, and I continued to ransack every nook and corner wherever I thought it might be. At last I found it hidden under some old rags in a little niche of the wall up in the attic. I don't think I ever discovered anything previously or since that gave me so much satisfaction as the finding of that revolver did. It was loaded and in excellent condition. I stuck it into my pocket and went downstairs to eat my dinner before I'd start out for the enemy. Mary was unsuspecting. After dinner I excused myself, stating I was going to the store.

All that day and the preceding night I had felt

normal, mentally and physically. My mind was clear and the irritation in my hand had entirely ceased. I felt like a regenerated man, the first time for a long, long time. However, I was determined to carry out my resolution, knowing well enough that my good fortune would last only temporarily—so long as the Professor willed it. I walked resolutely up to the Professor's house and noticed that all the shutters were partly closed with the exception of two on the second story. The ones to his office were shut up tight. The whole affair had a strange appearance to me, and I instinctively felt as though something was wrong—that my plans would miscarry.

I determined to find out, and that at once. I rang the bell for all I was worth. It was a ratchet bell, and I turned the knob back and forth until I heard someone approaching. It happened to be the servantgirl. She opened the door just far enough to see who was there.

"What is the matter?" she asked in an irritated tone of voice. "It wasn't necessary to make an alarm like that was it? We are not deaf."

"Pardon me, but I don't think you are the party in supreme command here."

I was stung by her rebuke, although she had a perfect right to call me down. But I certainly had taken delight in ringing that old bell. I could have rung it a whole year, if only to disturb that scoundrel's peace of mind, that the house contained. My intention was to get him mad before I killed him. I hated to kill him in cold blood and I thought that was a good way to get him off his base.

"Where is the Professor?" I asked somewhat sharply. "Is he home?"

"Yes he is home, but you can not see him today," the girl answered.

"I must see him," I answered, "and at once."

"It's impossible. He is very sick and no one but the nurse is allowed in the room."

"Is that so?" I exclaimed in mock alarm. "I hope he'll"—I checked myself just in time. I had almost said, "I hope he'll die." "You don't need to mention about my having been here, I'll come around tomorrow to inquire about his health. By the way when did he get sick?"

"Last night about seven o'clock. He got sick very suddenly, accompanied by very severe pains. The doctor thinks it is appendicitis and that an operation may be necessary," she answered.

The time of his sickness struck me very forcibly. That was the time I got relief. Up to that time his mind must have been centered on me, now, I suppose, he was occupied with himself. I left the house in a happier frame of mind than when I approached it. I would have liked to give that old door bell about fifty more turns before I left. "If only he would never get well," I kept wishing a thousand times on my way home. Or, "if he would only die under the operation." How I wished I could be the operating surgeon. Such as these and others of the same charitable kind of thoughts occupied my mind on my way home. My wife noticed my joyful appearance the moment I arrived in her presence.

"What's the matter, John? I haven't seen you look so happy in the last two years."

"Oh joy, Mary! The Professor is sick—dying. Isn't that a blessing?"

"Well, John, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to be happy when someone is dying," she answered in rebuke, more for the sake of conventionality than in expressing her real sentiments.

"My dear it's the first real good news I've heard

these last two years and I can't help but be happy over it. Nor can you, Mary," I answered.

In answer she threw her arms about my neck and gave me a kiss and walked away without saying a word. She immediately came back, her womanly curiosity aroused.

"John, who told you this?" she asked with a doubtful air.

"I was there and got it from the servant-girl," I answered, after which I told her the whole story. "You may put this away again," I said handing her the revolver. "I hope I may not need it."

"This was the hand of Providence, John. You ought to give thanks for being prevented from committing such a crime."

"I know, Mary dear. I want to see how it turns out first. He must die. There is no other alternative. I shall be very thankful if I don't have to bring it about."

I could hardly wait until the following day, so important had the Professor's welfare become to me. I started out for his house about ten o'clock the next morning. I met several people on my way there, but neither of them said anything to me beyond bidding me the time of day. Everybody in the village, by this time, took me for a lunatic and tried to avoid me. Perhaps those I met that morning had not heard the news. As I neared his house, a cheerful sight greeted my eyes: The sign of death—a black crape—on the door. No use to go any further. I turned round and hurried home to tell Mary. I shall never forget how lightly I trod the foot-path. Everything I looked at took on a brighter color. I felt like a slave having the shackles knocked off his ankles, and for the first time given his freedom. I was a free man again in body and soul. I whistled all the patriotic airs on my way home, from

Yankee Doodle down to The Star Spangled Banner. My wife was waiting for me at the gate. She was just as impatient as I had been.

"Mary, it's all over; we'll both go to the funeral. It's his death, and my resurrection."

Mary didn't express her real feeling in words. She was too well bred. But talk about canaries and mocking-birds. They weren't in it with her the remainder of that day, so far as vocal music was concerned. Never before, nor ever since, have I heard Mary, my wife, sing, as she did that day after hearing of the death of the Professor.

We both attended the funeral, and I dare say, if there ever was a chief-mourner at a funeral who felt like throwing up his hat in the air for joy, it was I at the Professor's.

The reason I call myself the chief-mourner is because in his death I lost a part of myself that gave me nothing but misery and mortification, and found regeneration.

Words fail me to describe the freedom and happiness I felt after the demise of the Professor. I was again allowed to follow my occupation unhampered: that of a painter. Work became a pleasure to me instead of a drudgery, as it had been the last two years.

It was about two months after the Professor's death when I again began to notice a strange sensation in my hand. It gradually began to lose life and took on a strange, waxen hue in appearance, slowly becoming scarred and shriveled. This strange appearance continued for several weeks after which time the tips of the fingers began to dry up completely, becoming brownish in color, something similar to the appearance of the fingers on mummies that one sees in our museums. It gave me no pain and therefore I didn't mind. In fact I was rather glad of it. The hand never was of any

earthly use to me outside of a curiosity to other people, and of that I had had quite enough. This mortifying process continued, gradually extending over the whole hand back to the wrist.

Several times I was strongly tempted to take the hatchet and with one blow detach it, but Mary always persuaded me not to. At last I got rid of it in an unexpected manner, and not without considerable pain either. I was on my way to the store one day in quest of some paint, when I happened to be beset by a strange dog belonging to a new neighbor who had made his arrival into the village several days previously. In trying to avoid the teeth of the canine I stumbled over a stone that obstructed my way, and came unexpectedly down on my decaying hand with such force that it snapped off at the wrist. It began to bleed profusely and the pain was so intense that it nearly set me crazy. It was almost as though someone shoved a red hot iron through my arm. I hurriedly picked up the hand and ran home where I promptly fainted from loss of blood and the pain I suffered. When I came to, the doctor was standing over me with a knowing smile on his face, my hand bandaged and dressed up.

"How do you feel?" he asked me.

"Much better but weak," I answered.

Before he left he asked me for the hand, stating that he wanted to preserve it in alcohol.

"Yes, for love's sake, take it away and never let me see it again," I answered.

"Mary," addressing my wife after the doctor had left, "two years ago I made a fool of myself in not obeying your wishes. To make sure of both of our future welfare I'll let you take the reins in hand again. All I ask of you is a square deal for your John."

RESURRECTION

I

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."—St. John 14-12.

JOHAN BRADFORD marked the verse, laid it on the foot of the bed, and then for the next ten minutes stared abstractedly into space. He neither saw nor heard physically, but on his mental vision a great light seemed to dawn.

"I wonder! I just wonder," he repeated to himself over and over.

He looked up at the little alarm clock and noted the time:—ten P. M. He hurriedly changed his slippers for his shoes, grabbed his hat and ten minutes later rang the bell of a noted eye specialist, a particular friend of his.

The doctor came to the door himself, being unoccupied at that hour of the night. He greeted him with a cordial:

"Why, how are you, John? Come right in."

He ushered him into his comfortable waiting room and wistfully waited for his friend to speak. After a few moments of perfect silence, as though it was the most momentous question in the universe, Bradford solemnly asked him:

"Doctor, people stricken blind through sickness—scarlet fever for instance—what happens to the eye or the optic nerve? What organic change takes place? Is the nerve destroyed?"

"Hm-m! Has your lady friend gone blind?"

"No, I simply want to know out of idle curiosity."

"At ten o'clock at night?"

"Yes, at one o'clock, if I desired to know and you were still up."

The doctor pondered for a few moments:

"The sense of sight is excited by the action of light on the retina. By this action a change is produced on the optic nerve fibers, and is conveyed by these to the brain, the result being a sensation of light or color. Now, in a case of blindness caused, we will presume, by scarlet-fever, no organic change takes place. Neither the eye nor the optic nerve is destroyed, and in some cases no one but a trained specialist would detect anything the matter with the eye without the aid of instruments. Blindness caused by a fever, I would say, is like a scorching or burning of the optic nerve, a paralysis due to the abnormally high temperature of the patient. The nerve, physically, is not destroyed; functionally, it is, and therefore dead; and where total blindness is the result can never be restored."

"What I can't understand is, why nature is unable to restore what it has destroyed; when it has not destroyed organically, but only functionally." John answered.

"That I am unable to answer. Science may some day be able to answer the question," the doctor answered stroking his chin perplexedly.

"Science! Science is too materialistic; it does not believe in anything else," Bradford answered warmly.

"Quite so. Science works through and by nature's laws. Whatsoever it cannot test and prove by those laws, it discards, rejects, and throws aside. How could it otherwise when its object is to discover and teach the truth. But to come back to the point: You must remember, in the present supposition the nerve cells, or

rather their usefulness is destroyed."

"Is that organic destruction?"

"No, but functional; in the case in point it amounts to the same thing."

"And thereby doctor, you are begging the question and contradicting what your profession is teaching every day when it says that every act and every thought is produced at the expense and destruction of cells which are again renewed by new ones taking their place. According to your professional theory, total blindness is irreparable. According to mine it is not, and under certain conditions it may be restored."

"I know what you mean. But has any one of your cult ever produced the goods?"

"Yes, One; and He taught the art to others. and they also produced the goods, as you term it. He commanded His followers to 'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead,' all through faith. And my faith is such, that it takes more than a professional theory to shake it. But it is getting late," drawing out his watch and noting the time. "I thank you for the information you have given me. I want to go home now and—think."

The doctor ushered him to the door, and after bidding each other good-night, John wended his way homeward thinking his professional friend narrowminded and prejudiced. The doctor retreated into his waiting-room, muttering under his breath concerning his friend's dreams and superstitious theories.

"With his Hypnotism, his Spiritualism, and his Christian Science—he can't talk on any other subject any more. He'll go crazy some day, and I feel sorry for him," he said, shaking his head wearily over his friend's sad fate.

Arriving in his room, Bradford again put on his slippers, took off his collar, and after lighting his pipe

settled himself in his big, comfortable Morris chair and once more stared into vacancy. Pipe after pipe he refilled, and not until the suffocating fumes in the room started him to cough did he note the lateness of the hour—three o'clock Sunday morning. He hurriedly raised the windows, undressed and went to bed.

II

ON his way to work in the morning, Bradford passed by a small corner grocery inside of which and behind the show window he had often noticed a little child seated on some high box or stool, gazing listlessly through the window into the street beyond. She never seemed to take notice of him nor anything else, unless it was the recognition of a passing footfall, the rattling of a wagon over the cobble-stones, a trolley-car, or a few words spoken by her elder sister who stood behind the counter to serve customers.

She appeared to him such a demure, forlorn-looking, little child, with such pale, beautiful, classical features as though cut out of marble. Her long, chestnut hair was hanging loosely about her neck and shoulders.

Her appearance touched him, and he often felt as though he would like to enter and hold her to his breast. Her appearance prompted him to discover something about her history; so one evening on his way home he inquired of one of the little street urchins about her.

"Do you mean little Mary in the store?" the child asked.

"Yes in the grocery store."

"Oh she can't see. She had a fever and went blind."

He thanked the child and continued on his way.

From that time on the fate of this little child was uppermost in his mind. How he longed for power to help her!

For many years he had been a student of Occult Science in all its phases. He had not only been a student but had also practised it—especially Hypnotism—successfully, and thoroughly understood the power

of the subjective mind over the body. He was a great Bible student and loved to read about the miracles of Christ, that greatest of all occultists.

"Were they miracles?" he oftentimes asked himself the question. Christ never called them so. They were the manifestations of a natural law thoroughly understood by the Master; a law, the control and understanding of which was latent in every rational human being if he but knew how to develop it; and most imperfectly understood by our sceptical scientists. Thus it happened on that particular evening, while reading his Bible he came across the verse:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."—St. John 14.12.

And this naturally brought to his mind the fate of the little girl in that little grocery store.

Several questions relative to the child's blindness suggested themselves to him which he was unable to answer professionally. "Imbecile that I am," he rasped between his teeth as he jumped out of his chair to don his street attire. Thus he came to visit his oculist friend.

One morning, soon after, as he passed the store, he noticed that there were no customers in. He turned back and entered.

The child was in her accustomed place, seated on the box, looking more sad than ever, he thought. Her sister was busy opening a box of oranges. As an excuse for entering, he bought a half dozen of them.

"How is your little sister this morning?" he asked while producing the necessary change to pay for them. "They tell me she is blind."

"Yes sir, she is totally blind," the girl answered.

"What was the cause of her blindness?" he asked in assumed ignorance.

"It was caused by fever, sir, six years ago. The doctor says she will never see. We had her to the eye hospital where they told us the same thing."

"What does your father do?"

"Father died five years ago. That is the reason we keep this store."

"How old is she now?"

"Eight years, sir."

While he was getting this information the child sat motionless, patiently waiting for the rays of the sun to light up her wan, little face, as she had been accustomed to, morning after morning for years, drinking in his healing rays.

Bradford watched her in silence for several minutes. His heart went out to her as she sat there so forlorn, so forsaken; and again he felt that desire to take her in his arms and express to her his great sympathy for her. He walked over and gently placed his hand on her head. She turned her face up toward his, her sightless eyes meeting his, a faint smile on her lips.

"Little sister, what are you waiting for?"

"For the sun, sir," she said, turning her face toward the east again.

"Did you ever see the sun, little sister?"

To be addressed as "little sister" by this strange man pleased her.

"I do not know, sir, but it shines so nice and warm on my face—and it makes me feel better," she said, her face lighting up at the pleasure she derived from the interest he took in her.

It had been a threatening morning and vainly had she been waiting for the sun to break through with his warm rays.

"Some day you will again see it—that great, big ball of fire in the sky—the same as your sister and I see it when it shines," he told her.

How her sad, little face lit up as she listened to his words, spoken in such a deep bass voice, so firmly and so convincingly! To her they were the sweetest message ever brought to her ears in all her sad, little life, and which to her had seemed so long.

"Do you believe what I have said?" he asked.

How could she doubt? The message had been to her as coming from some Guardian Spirit. Her very innocence prompted her to believe.

"Yes," she answered, quietly but firmly, to his question.

"If I tell you something, can you remember it? It is very easy."

"I think so," she answered confidently.

"Very good, my little friend," he said as he took her seat and placed her on his lap. "Tonight, when you go to bed, and after you have said your little prayer, you repeat these words to yourself: 'I am going to see; I am going to see.' Keep on saying them and believing them until you fall asleep. This you do every night and every morning, and during the day whenever you think of it; and I also will do my part. Then some morning you will wake up and see the sun and all the other beautiful things you cannot now see—the flowers, the birds, the trees—and your little heart will be filled with joy."

At this moment there was a rift in the clouds, the sun shining through with a bright, mellow light, his rays lighting up the child's face whose cheeks were flushed with a pale pink, under the excitement.

He gazed in rapture on the child's face. He had never seen such a beautiful, radiantly happy face in all his life. It appeared as though his words were blessed with the benediction of Heaven.

"How nice and warm it feels!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, and it means a good sign for your happiness."

Never before had he experienced such joy as he did at that moment. He spontaneously clasped the child in his arms and pressed a kiss on her lips. She put her frail, little arms about his neck, tears of joy filling her eyes as she clung to him with all her little strength. From that moment he was her knight, her hero—yea her saviour. All doubts, if she had any, were dispelled from that moment. How could she doubt after hearing him speak such beautiful words—words for which she had been yearning all her long, dreary years.

That night, after she had gone to bed, she hurriedly recited the prayer she had been taught. She was impatient to offer one as her overflowing little heart dictated. First she asked a blessing on her friend; this kind, generous man who had told her such a wonderful story of the joys she was to experience before so very long—the joy of romping and jumping, and playing with her little companions; the joy of beholding the face of her sister and mother; the joy of beholding the sun, the grass, the flowers, and the little birds in the great light of day which had been blotted out of her life, and which had dwarfed her body and soul.

Then she asked a blessing upon her own little self: that this good man's words might come true, and that the good Saviour would never forget his little friend in her great darkness, after which she repeated those words as she had been told.

III

THAT evening, all by himself in his room, Bradford consulted the Scripture. He searched through the four gospels for passages favorable to increasing and confirming his faith. When he came to the passage, "Oh ye of little faith! if your faith were but like a mustard seed," he inquired of himself whether his faith measured up to the size of a mustard seed. He believed in his heart, it did. He was a staunch believer in the Bible and its teachings; and in his theory of mental healing he had unbounded confidence. While in the hypnotic class he had seen demonstrations which he could not have believed otherwise. Had he not seen a cancer removed from the Professor's wife's cheek? Had he not seen a man's hearing restored? All through hypnotic suggestion. These were the facts that confirmed his faith.

After ten o'clock, the time he thought necessary for the child to be sound asleep, he retired and set his mind to work. For one hour he concentrated his powerful mind and will on his helpless little friend, projecting his thoughts on her subjective mind, telepathically, forgetting everything else concerning himself and his immediate surroundings.

Night after night, week after week, he continued in this practice. Several times he dropped into the store to speak encouragingly to his little patient. He always brought her joy. Her faith in her eventual recovery was supreme and he was well satisfied. He cautioned her and her sister not to mention it to anyone.

She told him of a wonderful dream she had had: in which he appeared unto her; and that he took her by the

hand and led her into a beautiful valley with cool running water and singing birds; and that she became very tired and laid down on the soft grass to rest; that he covered her with his coat, after which she fell into a deep sleep. When she awoke everything had been changed. Whereas before it had been darkness now everywhere it was light—such a glorious light. The birds—and, oh! they were such beautiful birds—were flying from tree to tree giving expression to their joy and freedom. Beautiful colored flowers nodded their heads to her wherever she went; the grass under her feet felt soft as velvet; and above all this, high in the sky, was that great, yellow ball of fire shining over all, and kissing it with his warm rays.

This dream represented to him a good omen and he was determined,—yea with an angry stamp of the foot, as it were,—he was determined to succeed. He knew that his powerful, positive mind was getting control over her subjective mind, and that, through his dominating influence she would eventually see.

Spring came with its joyful proclamation. All nature asserted itself; the ice and snow melted, the violets bloomed, the trees shot forth their leaves, and the birds began to mate and build their nests.

She still sat, every morning, on her high stool; not with that forlorn, disconsolate expression on her face, but with impatient expectancy waiting for his foot fall, which she unerringly detected. So one morning as he passed the door she tapped and beckoned him to enter. She sprang into his arms and told him the glad tidings—that she could see him dimly. She could even tell the bright spot in the sky from where the sun shone. There was still a mist before her eyes, she explained, but she could see his form if he stood in the light.

He was overjoyed. What would his oculist friend think now? He asked her mother's permission to come

and see her that night. He hurried home and hastily ate his dinner. He was impatient to be with the little girl. This night was to be the culmination of his efforts. He knew he would succeed in restoring her eyesight.

After she had been put to bed, he went up into her room alone. He held her thin, little hand in his and told her stories out of the "Arabian Nights" of "Sinbad the Sailor," and "Alladin and his Wonderful Lamp," until she became drowsy. He now exerted his hypnotic powers over her until he had induced a sound sleep.

The crucial time had arrived. He concentrated the entire power of his mind on the object to be attained. Over and over he repeated suggestions to her, telling her she would wake up with her eyesight restored. For a long time he continued thus, beads of perspiration standing out on his forehead. He became mentally weary. He finally released her hand and went downstairs, telling them not to disturb her in the morning; that she would wake about noon time. He went home fully convinced that his work was accomplished.

The next morning he avoided the store by taking another route. In the evening when he passed the store the mother stood under the door. She asked him to come in, and a moment after ushered him into the sitting room. He heard the patter of little feet, and a moment later she appeared, her whole body and soul expressive of the great joy she felt.

He held her in his arms all that evening until late in the night, she telling him of the great surprise in the morning when she awoke and discovered she could see plainly; he, telling her stories, caressing her and playing with her hair.

The next day being Sunday, he took her out into the park amongst the flowers, the birds, and the trees.

Thus the Spring, as in nature, had brought unto her Resurrection and a new Life.



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